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THE *Blue Jay*

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JUNE, 1959



Marbled Godwit

—Photo by F. W. Lahrman

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BLUE JAY CHATTER

We have become more and more conscious through our reading recently of the danger to wildlife involved in the use of insecticides. Articles like the one on "Insecticides and Wildlife" by M. H. A. Kennleyside in **Canadian Audubon** (Jan.-Feb., 1959) or the paper on "Insecticides and Birds" by George J. Wallace in **Audubon Magazine** (Jan.-Feb., 1959), or the study made by Ralph H. Allen Jr. for the **Passenger Pigeon** (Oct.-Dec., 1958) of wildlife losses in the Alabama fire ant program, show us that birds and other forms of wildlife have been suffering seriously in certain areas from DDT spraying. George Wallace goes so far as to maintain that "the current widespread and expanding pesticide program poses the greatest threat that animal life in North America has ever faced—worse than deforestation, worse than market hunting and illegal shooting, worse than drainage, drought, oil pollution, and possibly worse than all these decimating factors combined."

Wallace's disturbing statement receives scientific support from a study made on the Michigan State University campus at East Lansing of the population decline of robins over a five year period coincident with an intensive spraying program for Dutch Elm disease and for mosquito control. Robins were first noticed dying on the campus in the spring of 1955, the year following inauguration of the Dutch Elm disease control program, and this dying-off continued each spring until by the summer of 1958 robins were practically eliminated from the university campus and some parts of East Lansing. It was established that the robins were dying of insecticide poisoning from eating earthworms which had accumulated DDT in their bodies through feeding on leaf litter from sprayed trees. In the 185-acre North Campus which supported an estimated minimum of 185 pairs of robins in 1954, Dr. Wallace's June to August count of robins in 1958 produced only three adults and one fully winged bird of the year. The decline both in numbers of nesting pairs and in nesting success has been alarming.

Although robins were the object of this detailed study, it was noted that other ground feeding birds which eat earthworms were also affected, as were the tree-top feeders in an entirely different way through insect shortages or actual consumption of poisoned insects in lethal quantities or in sublethal quantities that may cause sterility in subsequent years.

Following the robin survey on the campus at East Lansing, it is interesting to note that the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology has chosen as its co-operative research project for 1959 a study of robin population in sprayed and unsprayed areas. Because the Dutch Elm disease is spreading in southern Wisconsin and increased DDT-spraying is being carried on, the society is urging its members to COUNT YOUR ROBINS THIS YEAR.

The possibility of a serious grasshopper outbreak in Saskatchewan in the spring of 1959 may similarly intensify insecticide programs in this province. We should like to urge all readers of the **Blue Jay** to be on the alert for any evidence of damage to birds and other animals resulting from the increased use of insecticides.

We have long been concerned about the effects on vegetation of 2, 4-D sprays, and many of us have deplored the disfiguration of country roadsides where weeds have been controlled by spraying instead of cutting. As each new spray has come on the market people hurry to take advantage of its obvious benefits without giving due consideration to possible harmful effects. It is imperative that a complete study be made by government departments and chemical firms of the effects of both weed and insect sprays before they are applied in a wholesale and perhaps dangerous fashion.

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Beauty Is One With These

By **John E. Nixon**, Wauchope

You ask me for a list of lovely things:

These will I name for you—

The soft green of the poplar's emerald hue;
The deep blue of the sky that April brings,
Half seen through clouds; moonbeams that dance and shake
On moving waters; the green gold light that lingers
In wooded groves, and little winds that make
Dark shadows on a pool's tranquility.
Frost laid by Winter's fingers
On window panes by night; starshine at dawn,
Or the wide ocean's blue immensity.
Are these not lovely things?

The music of the song the thrasher sings;
Sunlight on dew, and dew tracks on a lawn;
Blue shadows on the snow as evening falls.
The gleam of light on china and on glass;
Dim colours in the bricks of ancient walls;
Rainbows and bubbles, and the yellow gold
On spreading beds of opening daffodils.
The light of sunset thrown on barren hills;
The slow change of the seasons as they pass.
Bare boughs and twigs against a winter sky;
The sheen of pearl; the cold
Hard light of diamonds; the soft sigh
Of stirring trees when wind the forest fills.

Voices of children and the songs they sing.
The smile of childhood is a lovely thing!

—All laughter, when its source is innocent—

Men spent in years, yet in their age content;
And women, silver-haired and quiet eyed.
Beauty is one with these.
Beauty is everywhere for one who sees,
And only hides from those who from her hide.

Tree-Trunk Apartment

By **Cy Hampson**, Edmonton, Alberta

(with photos by the author)

"Can't you do something about that dripping tap?"

I struggled valiantly to enter the world of consciousness but slipped under again.

"Here's the wrench. It's driving me crazy." This time, I crossed the threshold and suddenly became aware of my wife standing over me in her dressing gown and brandishing a pipe wrench in her right hand.

"Please," she exhorted, "go down and fix that leaky tap. I've been trying for hours and hours to get to sleep." I struggled into the sweater which she was holding, absently took the pipe wrench from her hand and made my way obediently in the direction of the kitchen. Yawning, I switched on the light and began methodically to spread the jaws of the wrench. I squinted at the hot tap marked "Cold" but it yielded nothing. I had suspected this one; this was ever its favourite hour of performance. The cold-water tap with its legend "Hot" proved equally dry so I headed for the bathroom. No dice—both as dry as the shifting, shimmering sands of the Sahara. Concluding that I must be the only drip in the house, I deposited the wrench angrily upon the bedside rug and crawled in again beside my wife.

I had just begun to doze again when Clara shook me violently. "If you don't go down and fix that tap right now, I'll phone the plumbers . . . or the Fire Department . . . or the Police Station!"

This time, I struggled into a sitting position and began to explain as evenly as I could at 3:30 in the morning: "The taps are all tight. Every single one of them."

"Well, you're as deaf as a dead horse if you can't hear that tap dripping right now," she retorted. "Just listen."

And suddenly I heard it. The clear, piping call of the little saw-whet owl coming up from the ravine back of the house. Only on occasions such as this had I grave doubts about

the advisability of a would-be ornithologist marrying a defenceless stenographer.

"That's our saw-whet again. Remember. We heard him last year about this time. They nested in the apartment in the old dead poplar that blew down late this winter. They brought off the five youngsters we photographed out on the branch."

"But I didn't know that owls pecked holes in trees."

"They don't," I answered. "A woodpecker pecked out the cavity originally. The owls took it over later."

The tree in question had housed many interesting folk throughout much of its life and at least part of its death. It had first come to my attention a dozen years earlier when it still boasted a living branch or two, each equipped with a few life-preserving leaves. At this time, a pair of flickers had earnestly and exuberantly pecked out a cavity in



Original tenants of the tree-trunk apartment
"a pair of flickers reared their buzzing brood."



Second tenant—"perhaps our rarest visitor to the ravine"—the Richardson's Owl.

which they reared their buzzing brood. With great interest, we had watched the parents insert their stilletto-like beaks deep down the throats of the gaping youngsters in order to feed them.

Then a couple of years passed during which the apartment remained vacant and visibly "To Let." Early one March we recorded perhaps our rarest visitors to the ravine, a pair of Richardson's owls. The soft, musical notes of this small owl, drifting up from the spruce in the evenings, were quite unlike those of the even more diminutive saw-whet. The series of notes rose slightly in pitch and were much more closely spaced than those of the latter. Unless this owl has two quite different songs, I am convinced that Seton's notes referring to the species on the banks of the Athabaska River must, in reality, refer to the spring song of the saw-whet. The Richardson's owls at length took over the "flat" and nested there. They must have found both the entrance and quarters somewhat restricted in size; I had

only previously known them to nest in the deserted nesting sites of the great pileated woodpecker.

The tree had long since been dead and dilapidated when the saw-whets discovered its possibilities. For two years hand-running a pair of them occupied the cavity, filling the long spring nights with their delightful, measured, bell-like notes. We soon learned that we could bring them to within a few yards of us by standing in the deep shadows of the spruce trees and imitating their calls by whistling.

Indeed, a friend, Eddie Jones, captured one of these tiny owls by hand one warm April night when we were out whistling them in. The bird had come progressively closer until it perched directly above his head and less than ten feet away. As Eddie continued whistling, the owl suddenly left its perch and dropped directly upon his up-turned face. Eddie was so startled that he involuntarily brushed the bird to the ground at his feet. To our utter amazement, the owl immediately



Final tenant, the weasel—"A white animated face made its appearance."

flew up to another tree nearby and began once again to pipe. The original performance was repeated almost exactly except that on the second occasion Eddie was ready with his hands cupped about his face. As the owl landed, he deftly closed his hands and caught it. We banded the bird immediately and released it. None the worse, the pair brought off their brood successfully.

The next winter, a heavy January gale had brought the great, shallow-rooted tree to the ground, breaking it into two sections as it fell. This, we felt, must surely be the end of its tenancy by birds. And so it proved. However, one day in early February I had been tramping up the ravine with binoculars and camera when I came upon the paired tracks of a weasel in the new-fallen snow. I followed them curiously and judged from the intervening spaces when the animal had crossed clearings that it must be the long-tailed species. The trail led by devious route to the fallen tree—indeed, to the very cavity which the saw-

whets had tenanted the spring before. The trail led in but not out.

As I puzzled momentarily, a white animated face with black lustrous eyes and prominent ears made its appearance at the entrance. Quickly advancing, I drove the weasel back inside and hastily set up my camera. He re-appeared in a moment or two and I photographed, in all probability, the last tenant of this, our tree-trunk apartment.

This "Story for Professors" was sent to us by a reader who enjoys **Punch**:

Query in **Scottish Farmer**:

Do swans fly across country? If so, how far?

Answer: Yes. The distance depends on where they are going.

Punch comments: For long journeys, of course, they start farther back.

The Dance of the Sharp-tailed Grouse

As described by **Thomas Blakiston** in the *Ibis*, April, 1863

When the first naturalists visited the prairies, over one hundred years ago, they were greatly impressed by the dancing of the Sharp-tailed Grouse. After the second Franklin expedition, Thomas Drummond published his account of their dancing in *Botanical Miscellany* in 1830, while Dr. John Richardson of course published his observations in *Fauna Boreali Americana*, volume 2 on the birds being released in February, 1832. The best description, however, is that of Captain Thomas Blakiston, magnetic observer to the Palliser expedition, who was stationed at Carlton during the winter and spring of 1857-58. The following account was published in the April 1863 issue of *The Ibis* and is here offered for the interest of our readers.—C.S.H.

Towards spring the Sharp-tailed Grouse of a neighbourhood collect at a certain spot on the prairie (usually a small mound or other raised position) twice a day, morning and evening, about the time of sunrise and sunset, to celebrate, in their peculiar way, festivities of love, displayed to so remarkable a degree by birds of this family. By the inhabitants of the fur-countries this is called "dancing." It is commenced even before the snow is off the ground; and one frequently comes by chance on such places where the snow and grass are beaten down for the space of many yards. I had often, during the spring mornings, heard the peculiar chuckling noise made by the birds on these occasions; for it can be heard at a distance of over half a mile; but having been confined to the Fort during that part of the day by magnetic observations, I was not able to search out the originators of it, which was the more annoying as the hunters and others used to tell me most wonderful

stories of the "pheasants' dance." However, I was not doomed to be altogether disappointed; for, after our arduous work was completed, I went out on a trip to the plains, with the buffalo-hunters, at the commencement of April. On awaking one morning, when we were camped at a place called "Mosquito Springs" my ears caught the well-known chuckling sound. I need hardly say that I was not long before I tied my moccasins and made my way towards a small knoll on the plain, which was but a short distance from our night's camp; and on nearing the place I could observe some Sharp-tailed Grouse running about. They were quite unsuspicious as is always the case on these occasions, and did not seem to heed my approach; but as I wanted to get as near a view as possible, I went down on my hands and knees, and crawled towards the spot. Getting closer, I lay flat on my stomach, and pushed myself along till I gained the cover of a small stone (a rare



Photo by F. W. Lahrman

Sharp-tailed Grouse—"in the attitudes of fighting cocks opposed to each other."

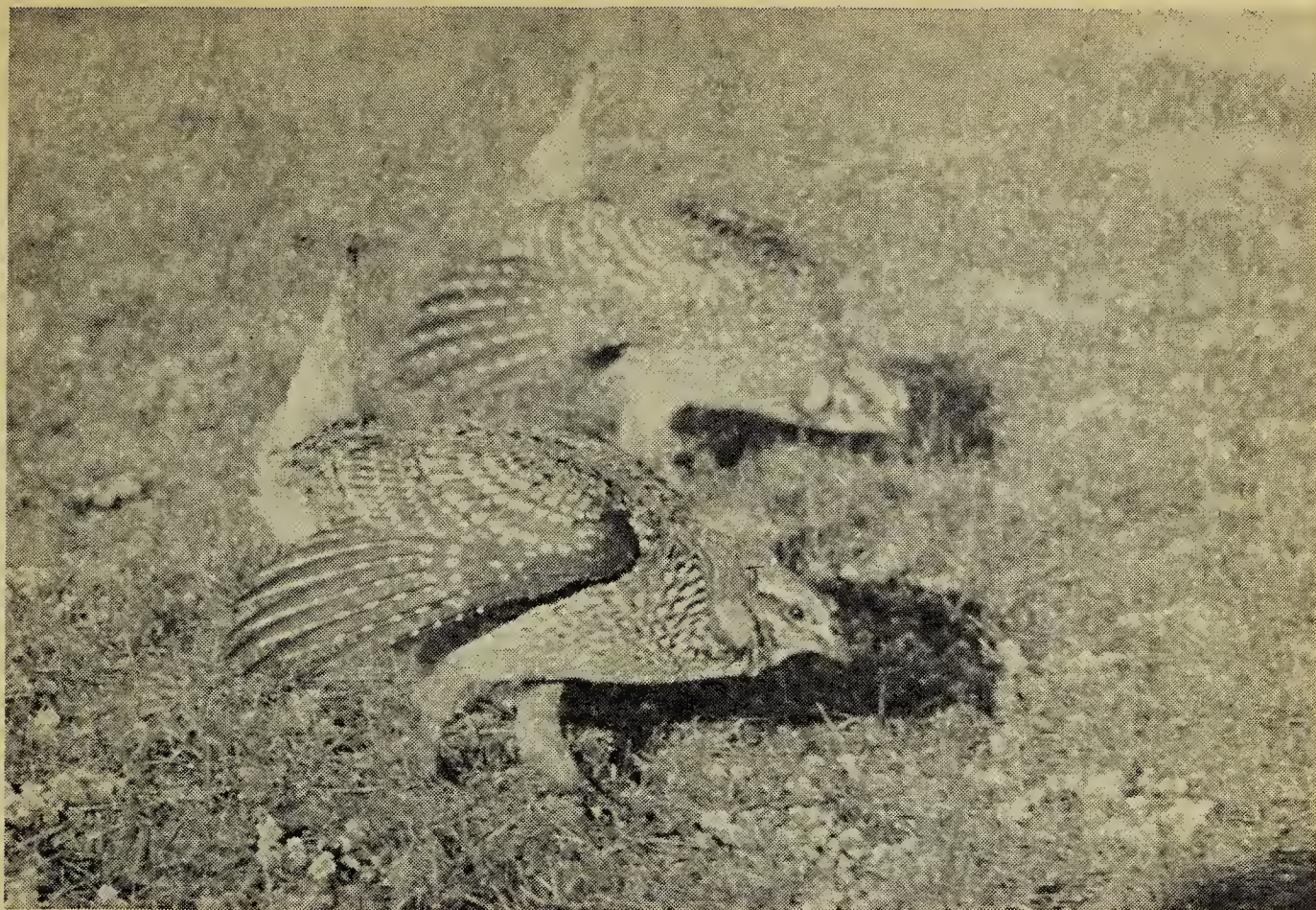


Photo by F. W. Lahrman

Sharp-tailed Grouse—"the sharp-pointed tail was erected at right angles to the back."

thing on the prairies) near the top of the knoll, within ten yards of some of the birds, where I stationed myself, and was well repaid the trouble of getting there. In this instance there were eight or ten birds (there are often many more) engaged in the performance. The two nearest to me were in the attitudes of fighting-cocks opposed to each other, and, besides the feathers of the occiput, ear-coverts and whole neck being set out to the greatest extent possible; the sharp-pointed tail was erected at right-angles to the back, thereby causing the light-coloured undertail-coverts to assume the form of a rosette; the wings were lowered and somewhat spread out, touching the ground, the quill-feathers of which, kept in constant quiver, made a sound like the rustling of a lady's silk dress. These two every now and then circled round, but kept their bodies in the same attitude, their heads nearly touching the ground, and again and again they "came up to scratch." Occasionally one of the two would make a jump in the air to the height of a couple of feet, and sometimes they chased one another; but they did not appear to fight. A little beyond

these two front actors was one amusing himself by strutting about with his head as high as he could get it, and like the others, with his tail erect; in fact, as his back was inclined, the tail being vertical was bent forward toward it: this is much more than the bird is wont to do at other times; for although when it is frightened and about to take wing it erects its tail, it is not nearly to the same extent. Besides these, others were running about and chasing one another in various directions, occasionally taking up the position of fighting-cocks, as already described. Then there were a couple which appeared to be doing nothing, but still they had their tails erected like the others. An odd one or two every now and then flew up and pitched again within a few yards. But above all this and besides the rustling sound of the wings, there was a constant loud chuckling noise kept up, which added music to the ceremony. I cannot describe the sound, but it is at times very loud, neither do I know how the birds make it. All this is the scene for a picture, and I should like to see a competent zoologist artist take it in hand.

Further Information on Resident Longspurs in Saskatchewan

By Frank Roy, Saskatoon

In the June, 1958 issue of the **Blue Jay** I commented upon the rapid decrease of McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs in the Lucky Lake-Birsay area, tucked within the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River. My observations elsewhere in the southern half of the province had led me to believe that the decrease was province-wide.

A number of members have written and in every instance they have a different story to tell. Bob Caldwell of Swift Current finds the Chestnut-collared Longspur very numerous in the southwest corner of the province, especially south of the Cypress Hills in the vicinity of Robsart, Climax, and Govenlock. Mr. George Fairfield, writing from Toronto, confirms Mr. Caldwell's observations. On June 18, 1958 Mr. Fairfield and his wife found Chestnut-collars common along Highway 21 between Cypress Lake and Vidora. Along this stretch of highway they counted 30 birds, most of them singing males.

George Ledingham of Regina, in the company of J. Hudson, found McCown's and Chestnut-collars very abundant in the area between Cottonwood Creek, south of Bracken, and Old Man On His Back Plateau, and in the Canopus-Killdeer area on May 18 and 19, 1958.

David Chandler, writing from Masefield just south of Val Marie, has noted no decline in numbers since he began birding there in the spring of 1948. He finds the Chestnut-collared Longspur to be the predominant species, and he says that it is still a common bird.

From other parts of the province, information is much less complete. George Ledingham says that both species are still fairly common in the Regina-Moose Jaw region, and that there are still "lots" of these birds on their farm, six miles west of Moose Jaw. On June 19, George Fairfield observed six male and two female McCown's Longspurs, and seven male and one female Chest-

nut-collared Longspur in a field just north of the Moose Jaw golf course. The female Chestnut-collar was flushed off a nest containing five eggs.

Bob Nero states that on a trip from Regina to Big Muddy Lake, May 23-24, 1958, he found the Chestnut-collared Longspur to be abundant "on and along the road where pasture land adjoined."

From the central portion of the province, we have the report of P. L. Beckie of Bladworth in the June, 1958 issue of the **Blue Jay**. He says that the Chestnut-collar is a common summer resident, but that McCown's has been recorded only three times, and in every instance in spring migration only. Bladworth is about 50 miles northwest of the Coteau region where I have recorded such a sharp decline in the numbers of both species. Farther east, Margaret Belcher reports that the Chestnut-collars are holding their own in the lake pastures east of Dilke and Holdfast, just west of Last Mountain Lake.

To return to the Lucky Lake-Birsay area, I find little or no change in the Longspur situation. Only three birds (all Chestnut-collars) were observed in the course of 260 miles driving within the area from May 16 to May 18, 1958. On June 28-29, these birds were observed in only one spot, just north of Lucky Lake at the base of the Coteau Hills. Even there, they were not common, perhaps four pairs to a quarter-section, and this in a limited pasture extending three miles along the lake shore.

There seems little doubt that both species are still common in much of the southern part of the province, particularly in the extreme southwest corner, south of the Cypress Hills. In view of this, I find it difficult to account for the pronounced decline in their numbers north of the South Saskatchewan River, but the fact remains: longspurs, once the most common bird in the Coteau, are now a rare and local species.

Additions to the Birds of Somme

By **Ronald and Donald Hooper**, Somme, Sask.

Since the publication of the *Preliminary List of the Birds of Somme District, Saskatchewan* (Contribution No. 3, Yorkton Natural History Society) in April, 1954, four new species have been identified in the area, four additional species collected (#) and seven additional species found nesting (N). This brings the totals to 210 species identified (plus 4 hypothetical), 157 species collected, and 95 species breeding.

Nesting Records

N# EARED GREBE. About 50 nests at Neely Lake, June 18, 1955.

N# BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO. Several seen and one collected July, 1954. Nest with two young found July 16, 1954.

N LONG-EARED OWL. Nest with one egg along MacNab Creek, May 19, 1954.

N WESTERN WOOD PEEWEE. Nest found in fork of tree, June 22, 1954.

N PHILADELPHIA VIREO. Nest in top of an aspen, June 15, 1954.

N TENNESSEE WARBLER. Nest with six eggs, on ground, June 18, 1954, southeast of Somme.

N YELLOWTHROAT. Nest with three young in sapling, Aug. 3, 1954.

In addition, a second nesting record was established for the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE when a nest was found in a hole in a poplar, June, 1958.

New Species Observed

PIED-BILLED GREBE. *Podilymbus podiceps*. Four found near Dunlop Lake, July 29, 1954.

YELLOW RAIL. *Coturnicops noveboracensis*. Abundant at marsh at junction of Bowman and Shand Creeks, June 1, 8, and 10, 1954. Two collected June 10, 1954.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL. *Loxia leucoptera*. Occasionally in mixed forest, November and December, 1954.

SMITH'S LONGSPUR. *Calcarius pictus*. One seen in field in company with Lapland Longspurs, May 12, 1954.

NOTE: Copies of *The Birds of Somme* are still available for 25 cents from Stuart Houston, M.D., Box 278, Yorkton, Sask.

A Pintail Drake - Mallard Pair Association

By **Alex Dzubin**, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon, Sask.

An association of a drake Pintail (*Anas acuta*) with a pair of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) during a two-week period in May, 1958, may be worthy of note, especially as to a possible explanation for the origin of Mallard x Pintail hybrids in the wild. Such crosses are relatively rare, but have been reported by Cockrum (Wilson Bull. 64:140-159) and Sibley (Condor 59:166-191). (In Saskatchewan I trapped an adult drake hybrid at Teo Lake, Kindersley, on October 14, 1957, which clearly showed dominant Mallard coloring except for having a narrow, light-blue bill, grey-orange tarsus, elongated tail and an indistinct cinnamon-brown chest region.)

The "trio" was first seen on May 3 during a routine census of the Canadian Wildlife Service study area, 15 miles W.S.W. of Kindersley. They were flushed and flew to a nearby slough, the male Pintail keeping be-

tween the male Mallard and the hen. At 7.15 a.m. on May 9, the group was seen on a road allowance 20 feet from the water's edge. The hen appeared to be slowly moving toward nesting cover with the male Pintail three feet behind her, and the drake Mallard some four feet behind the Pintail. On four occasions within the next ten minutes, the male Pintail rushed, with head down and bill open, toward the male Mallard and chased him some six to eight feet, the male Mallard running once and flushing three times. After each rush, the Pintail returned to the vicinity of the hen, occasionally pumping his head and whistling, i.e., "burping." The hen made no aggressive movement toward the male Pintail and continued to walk into nesting cover.

Again on May 10, at 11.40 a.m., the group was observed swimming on a slough. The drake Pintail and hen Mallard were swimming close to-

gether while the male Mallard was two or three feet away. Once the male Pintail stopped swimming and turned toward the male Mallard which immediately turned and swam away. The group was flushed from the same slough on May 14 and 16, but they were not seen after this date.

A check of the nesting cover toward which the female Mallard was originally seen walking, disclosed no nest, but three Mallards' nests which had been crushed and eaten by predators were found within 100 yards of this point. One of them might have belonged to the hen in question.

During the observations it was noted that the male Pintail, through threat postures and aggressive rushes, continually kept the male Mallard away from the hen. Yet the hen showed no such threatening attitudes toward the Pintail, nor did she show any escape reactions when the Pintail swam or walked close to her. Apparently this drake, of a different species, possessed none of the signal

characteristics necessary to elicit attack or escape in the hen. One can merely speculate as to why the male Mallard did not attack the male Pintail (or if he were merely associating with a mixed pair) and why the hen attracted the male Pintail.

Sibley (*op. cit.*) has pointed out that peak times of pairing vary among species and that this functions as an isolating mechanism. Furthermore, he noted that the various intricate signal movements of males in a courting party possibly prevent species from forming mixed pairs. From the above incident it is evident that, even though mixed pairs are not commonly formed, males of some species may, at times, accompany pairs of other species. It is suggested that if the attached male is dominant over the male of the pair, he could play a part in the fertilization of any eggs which the hen lays. Even if the foreign male is not dominant, he may passively accompany the pair and play a part in fertilizing the eggs.

Green-winged Teal-Mallard Pair Association

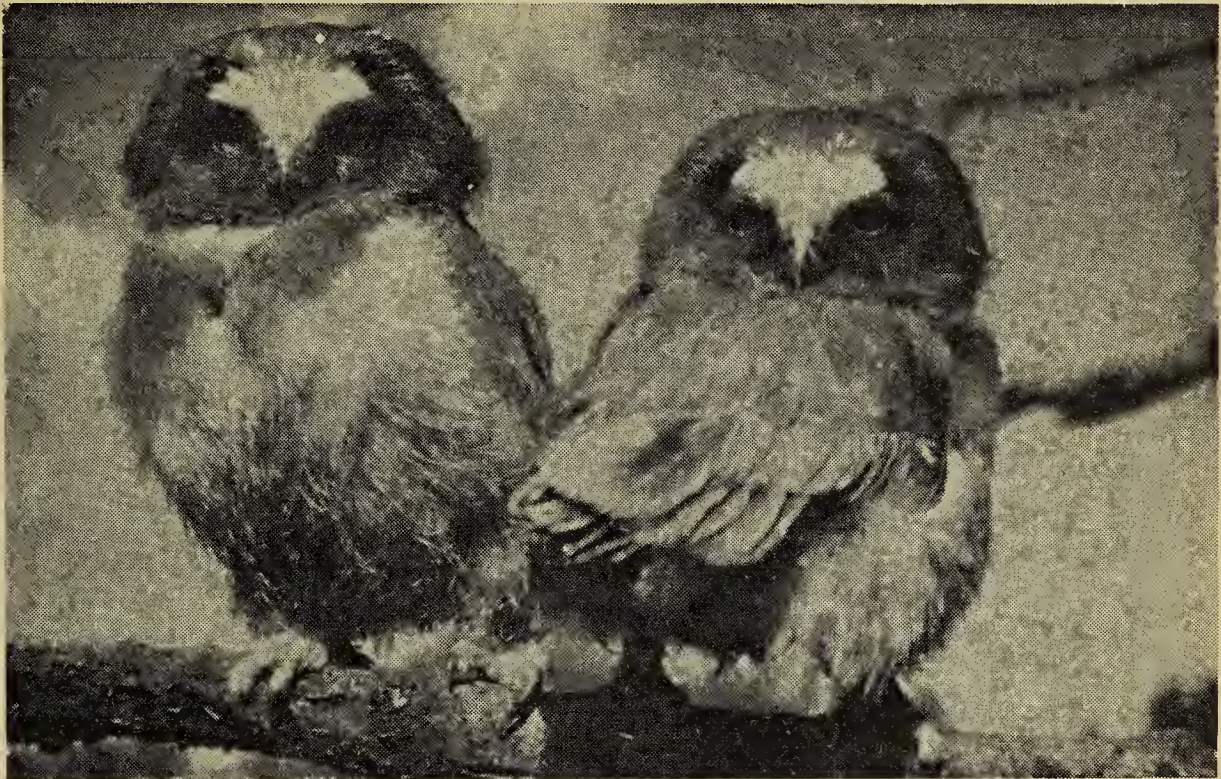
By R. W. Nero, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.

Close association of various species of birds is occasionally observed, especially in waterfowl and shorebirds which often move about in compact units. The general phenomenon of more heterogeneous species flying together momentarily when suddenly flushed has received several comments (H. Brackbill, 1952. Birds becoming "caught" in flocks of other species. *Wilson Bulletin*, 64:44). However, an observation made by Elmer Fox and myself of a close association between a hen Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and a drake Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*) seems unusual and worth recording. On May 11, 1957, near some shallow sloughs south of Regina at 4.00 p.m. we saw a drake Mallard and hen and a male Green-winged Teal, fly up together and circle wildly about several times with the Teal keeping very close to the hen. They landed as a group and again the Teal stayed close beside the hen Mallard. The drake Mallard appeared to be unconcerned. We watched them for a while, then, wondering if they would repeat the pattern, flushed them from the slough. They again flew up as a group and

landed on another slough several hundred yards away. During the flight and after they landed the Teal was close beside the hen. Upon landing the drake Mallard moved away to confront another drake Mallard. A few minutes later the original trio flew back to the location where we had first seen them. When we finally drove away the three were still close together. The association between the Teal and the hen seemed based on a very close bond, suggestive of pairing. A large number of hybrid ducks, including a cross between a Mallard and a Green-winged Teal, have been reported (E. L. Cockrum, 1952. A check-list and bibliography of hybrid birds in North America north of Mexico. *Wilson Bulletin*, 64:140-159). Presumably, a relationship similar to that described here must have prevailed in many cases. The drake Mallard of the trio, evidently paired or at least attached to the hen Mallard, appeared to have developed a tolerance toward the Teal. The exact nature of this peculiar relationship remains unanswered, but other observations of a similar nature may be helpful in this respect.

Photos of Two Small Resident Owls

by Doug Gilroy, Brora, Saskatchewan



These two young Saw-whet Owls have emerged from their tree-trunk nest. Two days after this photograph was taken, the owls were gone. Note the distinct light patch on the young owls' foreheads which is quite different from the spotted markings of the adult bird.



Unlike the Saw-whet which nests in trees, this small owl—the Burrowing Owl—is a ground nester. Here the adult bird watches from the mound above its burrow.

Apparent Courtship Behaviour of Least Flycatcher

by R. W. Nero, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History

On May 23, 1958, in the legislative grounds at Regina, Saskatchewan, I observed briefly what appeared to be courtship behaviour of the Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*).

At about 10:00 a.m., while searching for migrants in a grove of deciduous trees my attention was drawn to a thin, lispy vocalization being given by a Least Flycatcher which was hopping about in display in the branches of a tree some fifteen feet or so above the ground, and accompanied by a second Least Flycatcher. The displaying bird, which I presumed to be a male, was fluttering its wings, which were held out almost horizontally, and had its tail raised and spread, and its head withdrawn and beak slightly raised. As I watched, the "male" suddenly moved into a crotch formed of several upright branches arising from one place, a suitable nest support typical of sites usually selected by Least Flycatchers. While the "female" moved closer and silently watched from nearby, the "male", still displaying and still emitting a high-pitched "song" composed of short, rapid and repetitive notes, hopped about within the crotch, turning in all directions. After a few seconds the two birds moved off and I went on my way; no further observations were made.

This behaviour appeared similar and is, I believe, related to behaviour in the Redwinged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) that has been termed "symbolic nest-site selection" and "symbolic nest-building" (Nero, 1956). During courtship the redwing male flies slowly down into nesting cover and crawls through the vegetation with wings spread or raised, and on occasion manipulates nesting material, on rare occasions even going into an old nest to so display. The female, newly-arrived or already paired, watches closely from nearby and sometimes follows the male. Related displays have been observed in several members of the

blackbird family and other birds. This behaviour may be an attempt by the male to induce the female to begin nesting. It functions, as do most courtship displays, in synchronizing the sexual cycle of male and female. Eventually, the female redwing builds a nest, but only occasionally in the place where the male displayed, hence the use of the term "symbolic".

There is apparently little published description of courtship behaviour in the Least Flycatcher. There is a brief mention of the feeding of the female by the male (Macqueen, 1950), and some of the descriptions of the flight song (Macqueen also quotes other authors on this subject) suggest a kind of courtship behaviour. Courtship song-flights and aerial displays are typical of nearly all flycatchers (see Bent, 1942). In describing courtship of the Least Flycatcher, Bent briefly refers to pursuit flights and a general "... flirting of wings and tail." Courtship behaviour like that described in this note does not appear to have been previously observed in any member of the flycatcher family (Bent, *op. cit.*; Davis, 1954; Walkinshaw and Henry, 1957). However, the courtship behaviour of these birds is little known; an observer who is able to locate and watch a pair of flycatchers prior to nest-building might uncover similar and additional behaviour patterns.

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Bird Observations from Uranium City

By **Thomas Heaslip**, Uranium City, Sask.

I have been a resident of the Uranium City area for two and a half years, arriving in 1956 from Newtonards, Northern Ireland, where I was a member of the Copeland Islands Bird Observatory Society. A former residence of three and a half years in the Hudson Valley highlands of New York State provided my first opportunity for becoming acquainted with North American birds.

The winter residents in this area seem to be few in numbers: we have the Common Raven, Willow Ptarmigan, Boreal Chickadee, Gray Jay, Hairy Woodpecker, and an occasional small flock of redpolls. Towards the end of March I have noticed small parties of Pine Grosbeaks flying low in a northerly direction, their three-syllabled whistle being pleasant to hear after the long winter silence, broken now and then by the harsh croak of the raven. I have often been puzzled by the fact that, both in spring and autumn migrations, I have never seen any Pine Grosbeaks in male plumage, and I have thought that they all seemed to be either females or immature males. What, I wonder, has been the experience of other observers in this area with respect to these birds?*

The junco always seems to be the first real harbinger of spring as its cheerful little notes often accompany the first patter of spring raindrops and the hurrying bands of northward bound caribou.

May is the month I most enjoy; mosquitoes are still too few to be a real nuisance, the spring migrants are pouring in, and every little lake seems to be entertaining a party of ducks, swimming a few yards out from the melting ice along the edges. I find that wild ducks are curious about people, at least up here on the northland lakes; while sitting or crouching motionless partly under cover of a willow or pine at the lake's edge, I have had small groups of ducks come to within a few yards of me. Many Buffleheads have given me great pleasure in this way; they appear to be the commonest duck on

the lakes here in spring just after the thaw. Horned Grebes accompany the ducks on the lakes. One of the strangest bird calls I have ever heard came from a pair of large grebes which I took to be Red-necked Grebes.

The large gulls (Herring Gulls?) arrive here about the first of May and depart in November. I am not aware of any nesting colonies, but I have noticed that towards the end of their resident period, the number of immatures increases and that the immatures are the last to leave. This may just be due to the camp's garbage dump having a greater attraction for the immature birds. Here at the garbage dump during the month of November I recorded the only Magpie that I have seen in the area in two and a half years. It stayed for about three weeks, then disappeared after the first cold spell. It was also at this garbage dump that I observed the Whimbrel included in my general list.

On May 27, 1958, as I was watching a pair of sapsuckers near a stream, an immature Golden Eagle suddenly appeared flying low over the tree tops, mobbed by a pair of ravens. Eventually it got rid of the ravens by circling to a great height, then it disappeared in an easterly direction. Four days later I enjoyed watching an adult Bald Eagle soaring over Beaverlodge Lake.

Hawks do not seem to be common in this local area, with the exception of the little Sparrow Hawk, this being the only species observed throughout the summer. I understand that a pair of Peregrine Falcons stayed last spring near the Uranium City Hospital and probably nested, but I did not see these birds myself. My observations are ordinarily confined to an area roughly three miles from camp, which is situated about eleven miles to the south of Uranium City. An exception was a brief visit to a sheltered inlet of Lake Athabasca last June where I saw a large flock of Common Mergansers.

* One of our members, E. N. Shannon, who used to live at Uranium City, says that he has personally always seen the males and females together.—Ed.

I hope that in the future, a greater degree of protection may be afforded the birds of Northern Saskatchewan. In the spring season I have come across ravens and grebes killed by .22 bullets. Perhaps some of the people in our northern camps, particularly newcomers to the country, are not even aware of bird protection laws. It would help, I think, if the provincial government could see that copies of game and bird protection laws were posted conspicuously in every camp.

SPECIES LIST: Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Horned Grebe, Canada Goose, Mallard, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Surf Scoter, Common Merganser, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, Sparrow Hawk, Spruce Grouse, Willow Ptarmigan, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Whimbrel, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Northern Phalarope, Herring (?) Gull, Common Nighthawk, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Three-toed Woodpecker, Least Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Gray Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Common Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Solitary Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Hoary Redpoll, Common Redpoll, Slate-colored Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow.

NORTHERN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER AT YORKTON.

The first definite record of a Three-toed Woodpecker for Yorkton was obtained on October 28, 1958, when three grade four pupils of Miss Pauline Summers at Simpson School found a Northern (American) Three-toed Woodpecker lying dead on the ground on Marion Street near the C.N.R. tracks. It was clutching a leaf in its feet. It has been made into a study skin by Dr. Houston. The girls were Georgina Demchuk, Janet Parno and Caroline Crandall.—**Stuart Houston, Yorkton.**

HOODED MERGANSERS AT YORKTON. — Several flocks of Hooded Mergansers were seen last fall at Leech and Crescent Lakes, south of Yorkton. A beautiful adult male and a female were shot at Leech Lake on October 20, 1958, by Bert Moore and a female was shot at Chas. Maddaford's, at the Crescent or "Maple Island" Marsh by Dr. C. J. Houston on October 25, 1958.

Only two records of this species were listed in Houston's *The Birds of the Yorkton District. Saskatchewan* (Can. Field-Nat. 63, 1949, p. 215-241). Two subsequent records are for one shot September 18, 1951, at Rousay Lake by R. M. Baldwin, and an adult female sighted by Stuart and Mary Houston, half a mile north of the York Lake Golf Course on June 24, 1952.—**Stuart Houston, Yorkton.**

INTERESTING BLACK DUCK RECORD.—I have a Black Duck record which I believe is of great interest. #576-19325 was banded at Kutawagan Lake on July 19, 1957, as a flightless adult male. It returned to moult at the same lake next summer and was recaptured on July 9, 1958. This may only be a coincidence, or perhaps Black Ducks are not the random wanderers we thought they were.—**Tim Sterling, Ducks Unlimited.**

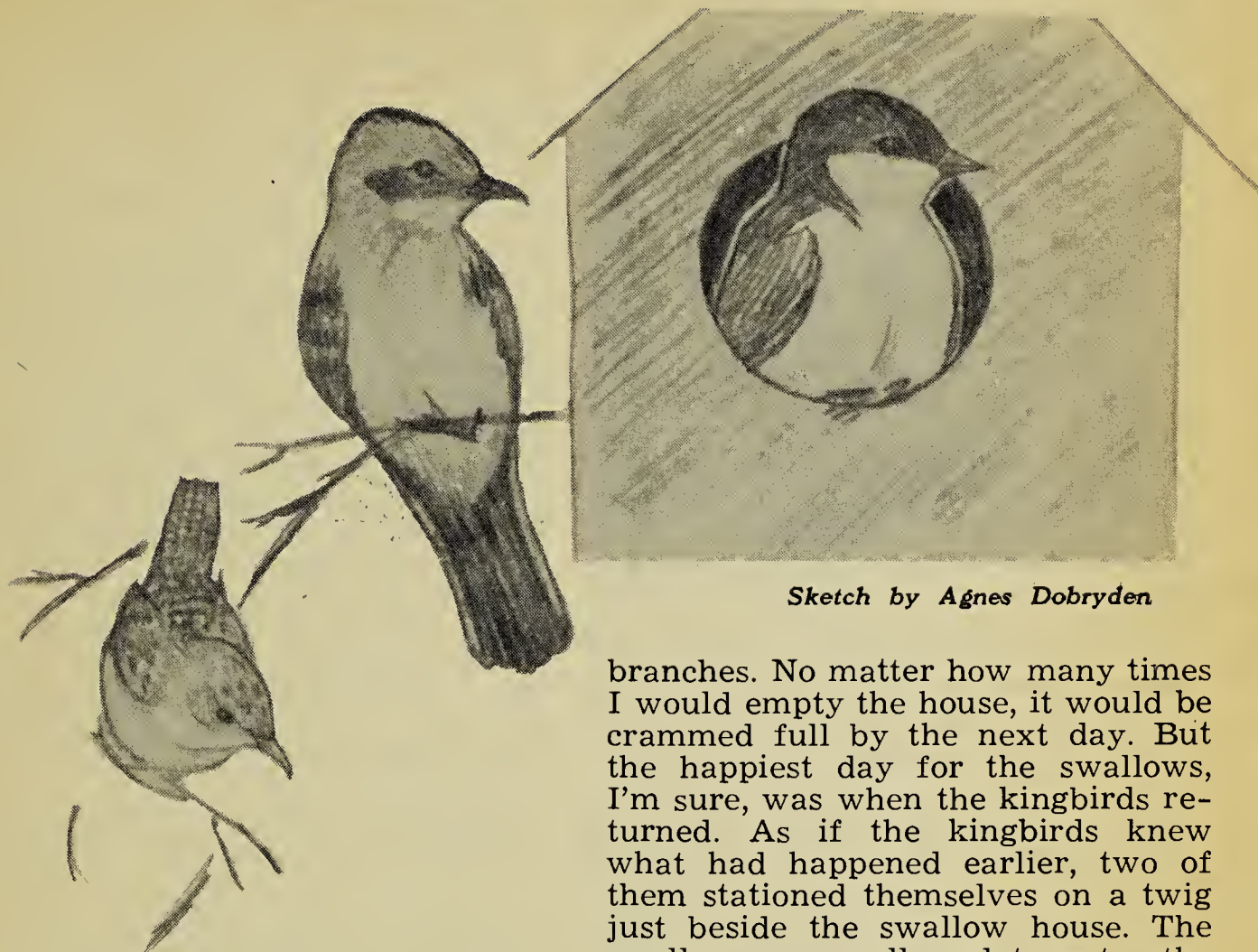
RAT MOBBED BY HOUSE SPARROWS. — In mid-January, 1959, I glanced out of my kitchen window at the flock of about two dozen sparrows which feeds each morning in my back yard at 3251 Angus Street. I was startled to see a rat running along the back fence. "Oh! Oh!" I thought, "I will be asked to stop feeding the sparrows in case I am encouraging rats. The poor little mites! And such a cold winter!"

However, there was no need for concern because the rat was kept away from the feeding area by the birds themselves. As soon as the rat started towards the birds' food, about ten sparrows swooped down on him en masse and he quickly headed toward the back gate.

I have been putting food out for birds every morning for several years, winter and summer—bread, wheat, raisins, fat. The birds' feeding area is on the ground and the snow is shovelled off by my son whenever it fills in during the winter. The rat was never allowed to reach the feeding area, though once while I watched he came close. I observed these happenings for two mornings, then the rat disappeared and I have not seen him since. There has been a heavy fall of snow since, but no rat tracks—of that I am sure. There have certainly been none near the feeding area.—**Holly Wallace, Regina.**

Bird Neighbours

By Margaret Dobryden, Sanford, Manitoba.



Sketch by Agnes Dobryden

During the spring of 1957 I witnessed with interest the return of the tree swallows, house wrens and particularly the kingbirds. Of the three species the tree swallows returned the earliest, and before long were busy with their duties. After numerous trips with beakfuls of grass, twigs, rootlets, and feathers, the house was ready for the eggs. By then the second little fellow, the house wren—or, more suitably, “the eggbeater”—had arrived.

As soon as he returned, he bustled about with his continuous chattering. When he stopped chattering I recalled that silence many times means trouble, and sure enough, before long I discovered that the little “eggbeater” was busy “beating” up the swallows’ eggs. And, as fast as fire, the egg shells were sent flying out of the swallows’ house. After this mission was completed, the house was crammed full of the sharpest wild plum thorns and tiny lengths of

branches. No matter how many times I would empty the house, it would be crammed full by the next day. But the happiest day for the swallows, I’m sure, was when the kingbirds returned. As if the kingbirds knew what had happened earlier, two of them stationed themselves on a twig just beside the swallow house. The swallows were allowed to enter the house and resume their duties, but a close watch was kept on the house wren. As soon as the wren would attempt to enter the house, the kingbirds would deftly swoop at him and send him on his way. After several days the wren learned his lesson and retreated to a wren house; the kingbirds commenced their nesting duties, and the swallows managed to raise a family in peace.

MEADOWLARK SONG AT NIGHT.—Members of the blackbird family, at least in my experience, are usually so silent at night, that it was a considerable surprise to hear the full song of the Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) suddenly at about 10:00 p.m. M.D.T. on May 24, 1958, in the Big Muddy Valley near Bengough. The song was heard only once although we were awake for some time afterward. The night was cool, quiet and moonlit. Clay-colored Sparrows (*Spizella pallida*) were occasionally heard even later.—**R. W. Nero**, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.

FLUCTUATING WINTER BIRD POPULATIONS.— *Sig Jordheim* of *White Bear* writes to ask how many **Blue Jay** readers saw redpolls this past winter, commenting on their scarcity in his area. In the winter of 1957-58 he had anywhere from 500 to 1,000 of them feeding at his feed station (a little pasture knoll on which he scatters grain cleanings or screenings), but this year only a few redpolls fed there for a short time and only a few small, scattered flocks were seen elsewhere all winter. Here in Regina our experience with redpolls has been similar, only a few of these birds being observed in the Legislative Grounds during the whole season. On the other hand, we had an unusual number of Bohemian Waxwings, reported throughout the winter by observers in different parts of the city. It appears that they were also common farther south. A clipping from the *Story City Herald*, March 12, 1959, sent on to us by *Mrs. Thorval Anderson* of *Kelving-*

ton, tells of an unusual major invasion of Bohemian Waxwings in Iowa. Jack Musgrove, Iowa state department naturalist, was quoted as having received his first Iowa specimen of the bird in his 22 years with the state, and observations of the birds were coming in from many points in the state. Previous appearances reported for the state were dated 1875, 1879, 1900, 1922. These comments on redpolls and waxwings show that the numbers of our winter birds do fluctuate markedly. It was interesting to see the same observation made in a column of Hugh Boyd's (*Leader-Post*, March 9, 1935), that I happened to be re-reading recently. He noted that redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks and Bohemian Waxwings, usually to be seen in Regina, were conspicuous by their absence during the winter of 1934-35; and John Walker had written at the same time from Moose Jaw to say that "he had not seen a single Pine Grosbeak, Bohemian Waxwing, or redpoll that winter."

Protection for Hawks and Owls in Sask.

In the last issue of the **Blue Jay** we published the preliminary draft of a brief from the Saskatchewan Natural History Society urging protection for hawks and owls. Since then, encouraging support has come from two other organizations. The Saskatchewan Fish and Game League, at its annual convention in North Battleford, February 12-14, 1959, passed the following amended resolution 31-0:

Resolved that legal protection be given to hawks and owls except that a farmer, game farm owner or employee of either, may shoot any such bird that is causing damage. Amended to provide legal protection between April 1 and November 30 only, with the exception as in the resolution.

Later, at a meeting on April 27, 1959, the Regina branch of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists and the Agricultural Institute of Canada passed the motion that they were in agreement, in principle, with the recommendation of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society to the Government of Saskatchewan that:

Every bird of prey (eagle, osprey, hawk and owl) should be protected, except that the owner of poultry or other domestic animals and the members of his immediate household may destroy by shooting any hawk or owl which is doing real damage,

or threatening damage to the said poultry or other domestic animals.

Our society will urge the Government at its next session to implement legislation providing full protection. The two resolutions recently passed encourage us to believe that many groups in the province are sympathetic to such protection. If you have contacts with such groups, we urge you to ask for their support. Copies of the brief and other information desired may be obtained from Dr. R. Bremner, Chairman of the Predator Committee, 725 University Drive, Saskatoon, or G. F. Ledingham, Editor of the **Blue Jay**, 2335 Athol St., Regina.

June is the month of most activity for many species of birds breeding in the prairie provinces. If you have information about nesting birds in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta, please send for and fill in nest record cards for the Prairie Nest Records Scheme. Write for cards to **Prairie Nest Records Scheme, c/o Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Sask.**

A.O.U. Meeting, Regina, August 25-30

All members of the S.N.H.S. seriously interested in birds are reminded that the feature of 1959 will be the meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in Regina, August 25-30.

PLACE:

Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.

PROGRAMME:

Tuesday, August 25: Registration (afternoon and evening); business meetings (Council Members, Fellows, Elective Members only); Museum Open House 7:00-10:00 p.m. (films at 8:00, informal reception at 9:00).

Wednesday, August 26: Registration (all day); papers sessions (all day); tour to Fort Qu'Appelle for wives of delegates 1:00 p.m.; opening of Canadian bird art and Museum bird photo exhibits; exhibits reception, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 8:15 p.m.

Thursday, August 27: Registration (all day); papers sessions (all day); picnic supper Wascana Park 6.30 p.m.; film programme at Museum 8:30 p.m.

Friday, August 28: Papers sessions (all day); annual banquet 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, August 29: All-day field trip to north end of Last Mountain Lake, buses leaving Regina College at 7:00 a.m.

Sunday, August 30: Additional local field trip.

All activities (except the business meetings) are open to non A.O.U. members. There will be a registration fee of \$2.00, and an activities fee of \$3.00 (covering banquet, receptions at Museum and Art Gallery, field trips, etc.). The local A.O.U. committee hopes to have certain funds to assist student ornithologists and serious young amateur bird students to come from various parts of Canada to the Regina meeting. Chairman of the Students Grants Committee is Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.

Further information about the programme is available in the A.O.U. circular of information which will be mailed upon request from the Museum.

Co-operative Bird Migration Study

For the past six years, hundreds of observers have been co-operating in a continent-wide study of the spring migration of a selected list of species of birds, carried out under the auspices of the U.S.A. Fish and Wildlife Service. This year the **Blue Jay** is again participating in the study, and members are asked to submit the records that they have been keeping of the 1959 spring migration. You will remember that information is requested on first seen dates and if possible dates of peak migration and final departure. The forty species on which information is desired this year are:

Whistling Swan

Canada Goose

Mallard

Pintail

Marsh Hawk

Killdeer

Common Snipe

Mourning Dove

Common Nighthawk

Chimney Swift

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Yellow-shafted Flicker

Eastern Kingbird

Great Crested Flycatcher

Eastern Phoebe

Eastern Wood Peewee

Barn Swallow

Purple Martin

Common Crow

House Wren

Catbird

Brown Thrasher

Wood Thrush

Eastern Bluebird (male)

Eastern Bluebird (female)

Red-eyed Vireo

Black-and-white Warbler

Yellow Warbler

Myrtle Warbler

Ovenbird

American Redstart

Red-winged Blackbird

Baltimore Oriole

Scarlet Tanager

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Indigo Bunting

American Goldfinch

Slate-colored Junco

Chipping Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Parks and People

By **P. A. Gregg**, Conservation Information Service, Department of Natural Resources.

Why do Saskatchewan's provincial parks attract thousands of visitors each year? This seemingly simple question might be answered by enumerating specific activities such as swimming, fishing, or camping, but a better answer would be in terms of fundamental human needs.

All human beings require some form of recreation and a large percentage of them prefer outdoor recreation. The reasons for this preference are probably rooted in antiquity, for with the possible exception of the past hundred years or so, most people lived close to the land and were employed in agriculture or some other outdoor activity. All down through pre-history and historical times this has been man's role and he was well adapted to it. In the face of today's artificial environments and the tensions of the atomic age it is little wonder that people visit our parks. Consciously or unconsciously they are seeking renewed contact with nature and a refreshing relaxation from the high-pressure pattern of their lives.

Over the past decade or so an increasing number of Saskatchewan's people have actively taken part in

some form of outdoor recreation and the pressure of their numbers is being felt within our parks and outside them as well. Why has this upsurge in the use of parks and outdoor recreation in general come about? Aside from natural population growth, increased urbanization and the hectic pace of our industrially oriented life provide the answer. Paradoxically, these changes have furnished the public with not only the motivation but also with the means and the money to travel more extensively about our countryside and to visit more parks. The average person today enjoys more leisure time, a better car and a generally higher living standard than did the previous generation. Equally important, the quality and quantity of our roads are vastly improved. It is to be expected, therefore, that such an individual will visit more parks and visit parks more often.

But population growth, development and industrialization create two other conditions which compound the problems facing parks and people. In many instances, these economic forces stimulate city growth at geographical locations where there is



Saskatchewan Government Photo.

LET'S GO SWIMMING: Two youngsters contemplate the water at Crystal Lake, Sask.

little or no naturally attractive area nearby which would be suitable for development into parks. Secondly urbanization tends to utilize for non-recreational purposes areas near cities which may possess marginal recreational potential. This occurs because such locations are quickly taken up for industrial purposes, subjected to intensive agriculture or posted against trespassing by the owners who object to the public using them intensively for picnics, camping, etc.

The Utopian solution to the problem of what to do about large numbers of urban and rural people who want more outdoor recreation would be the creation of an adequate number of strategically located, scenically attractive provincial parks containing all the natural features and man-made facilities which would appeal to a wide variety of specific tastes. However, in southern Saskatchewan the population concentrations are situated at considerable distances from most provincial parks and the best recreational areas of the province.

The seriousness of this situation was recognized early by the provincial Department of Natural Resources. Because of the dearth of information on outdoor recreation in Saskatchewan and park needs, particularly in the southern part of the province, the Department of Natural Resources obtained the services of a qualified recreational consultant to conduct a recreational survey and make recommendations.

As a result of the survey and recommendations made by W. M. Baker, the Department of Natural Resources has attacked the problem by establishing three new provincial parks and expects to create more in the future, particularly in the southern part of the province where the need is already acute.

A great many factors must be evaluated before a new park is created. A careful investigation of the natural suitability of the area for use as a park is undertaken and top priority is given to such features as water, beaches, forest cover, and scenery. Because of the urgent need for park facilities in southern Saskatchewan, accessibility from the major population areas and cities is



Sask. Govt. Photo.

OFF FOR A WALK: A view of one of the many tree-bordered roads at Duck Mountain Provincial Park.

an extremely important criterion in choosing an area for a park. This means that highly inaccessible areas possessing only marginal natural features must receive serious consideration as future parks to serve the needs of nearby population centres. Whatever natural features these key locations possess must be used as fully as possible. Because such areas do not, as a rule, contain all the desirable natural attributes of an ideal park, careful thought must be given to the feasibility of improving or creating artificially those features which they lack. Tree planting, fish stocking, water impoundment and beach construction are common examples of this type of improvement.

People visiting various provincial parks are impressed by the great difference in size and natural features which they observe. These variations arise in part from the natural differences in forest cover, topography and climate which occur at widely separated locations within the province. However, other differences among our parks can be attributed to the limitations imposed by the need for a high degree of accessibility to cities. Natural differences, plus those which are dictated by the need for accessibility, give rise to the various

specialized types of parks which are found in Saskatchewan.

The first of these types of parks is the wilderness park which, as the name implies, contains a large tract of land generally far removed from population centres. In order to administer these areas and to provide the minimum accommodations essential for the park's use, a wilderness park may contain small developed nuclei. Because of its location and inherent qualities, a wilderness park is not used as intensively as some of the other types; however, the continued existence of wilderness parks can be fully justified for the enjoyment of those people who desire contact with unspoiled, wild beauty.

Compared with wilderness parks, multi-purpose parks are less extensive in size and located near population centres. In spite of the fact that they are much more intensively used and contain more cottage developments and other facilities, multi-purpose parks usually support plenty of big and small game. Some smaller multi-purpose parks become almost entirely regional in function and chiefly serve the recreational requirements of some nearby city.

The smallest types of parks are parkettes and roadside picnic sites. These not only provide pleasant and easily accessible locations for a family picnic but make a relatively low cost holiday trip possible for many families who would otherwise be forced to stop at expensive restaurants for meals.

Will the creation of more of these various types of parks tailored to meet the specific recreational needs of Saskatchewan's people, provide a solution to the mounting pressures for more park facilities? Only the future can answer this question with finality. But in the future lies great hope. The establishment and maintenance of more parks is a challenge which surely will be met. Equally, important, however, to the success of any program of park recreational development is the attitude of the people. Aldo Leopold, father of the modern wildlife conservation movement, has said:

"Recreation development is a job, not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind."

It is heartening to note that according to the Baker report the thing which pleased people most about our provincial parks was not the opportunities for quiet or rest, or even the pleasures of picnicking or fishing, but the park's beautiful scenery. Certainly there is no lack of receptivity here.

ESTABLISHING A WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AT ROCANVILLE

By E. E. Symons, Rocanville

Since last fall was an extremely dry season, it was possible for us to complete a project that we have had in mind for a long time. This project was the establishing of a wildlife sanctuary on a quarter section of wild land which I have owned for years, six miles north and two miles east of Wapella (or ten miles west and two miles south of Rocanville). This is a piece of land with many sloughs and deep "potholes," and stones galore. It was burned over in 1932 and left completely black, but it now has a 27-year growth of poplar and willow covering over 90% of the area.

Ten years ago we decided to turn this quarter section into a wildlife sanctuary. The first job was to build a dam on the road allowance, and we did this with the assistance of the municipality. The dam was fine until the water got high, when it simply overflowed at another place! Then the muskrats burrowed under the dam and water seeped through all summer, keeping our neighbour's property downstream sticky most of the season!

Last fall the sloughs were bone dry, and we felt that it was "now-or-never." Our plans at first were modest—we intended to have a big dugout excavated and some filling done. As the work progressed, however, we realized that this was the time to go ahead with our plans, even if they involved further expense. We ended up with a water conservation area which will cover from 12 to 15 acres at high-water level. We built levees where needed around the main pond, in which the water will reach a depth of four and one half feet at several points; we raised dams on the road 12 to 15

inches; we made a "duck" island; and finally, we created two smaller ponds three to four feet deep, and covering from one to one and a half acres each, several yards upstream. The normal watershed is probably 75-100 acres, with runoff from 150-175 acres in times of flooding.

We received some assistance with our project—\$125.00 from P.F.R.A. and \$147.00 from the municipality. The rest of our expenses, which we met ourselves, including the cost of a mile-long fire-break, totalled over \$1300.00. We feel that our investment has provided a very pleasant spot for summer outings, and we hope that it will prove to be really worthwhile in encouraging wildlife. Comments and visitors will always be welcome, as well as any suggestions that our friends and readers may have for improving the sanctuary.

JEFFERIES INGLEWOOD BIRD SANCTUARY

By Pearl Guest, Regina

It was one of those fickle days of sunshine and showers during the summer of 1958 when my brother nosed the car through traffic and towards the south-eastern section of Calgary. The Inglewood Bird Sanctuary was our destination. Entering through a small gate, John observed that it was like walking into another world as we followed a footpath through the trees and down to the edge of a pond where flocks of Canada geese and different kinds of ducks cruised leisurely on the water. They all paused at our approach and then headed hopefully towards us but, thoughtlessly unprepared, we had little to feed them.

Athwart the water lay a small dam topped by a footbridge. Crossing on this, we came on to what turned out to be a peninsula bordered on the west by the spring-fed pond and on the east by the Bow River. Following the shore line, we came to the isolated nesting area and a fish fingerling pond. Exploring eastwards, we came to the wide river, and turning again, discovered a winding path through the tall old trees that led us back to the dam.

Robins gave little heed to our passing, but a squirrel voiced garrulous objection at the intrusion. Somewhere a veery sang and I was surprised at his boldness as in our Hid-

den Valley Sanctuary I had become accustomed to veeries as shy retiring birds singing in the twilight. But not so with this songster whose bell-like notes rang out across the water, accentuating the silence and seclusion of the woodland.

Threatening clouds forced our reluctant return to the car and we drove back to the big brick house which is the Headquarters of the Sanctuary. There we were welcomed by the host of the mansion, Mr. George Spargo, Secretary-Manager of the Alberta Fish and Game League. In the ensuing conversation, we learned that the late Ed. Jefferies had donated this residence and its immediate land to the League for its permanent home, and that it administered the affairs of the 120-acre sanctuary. Actually the haven has been in existence for many years, for Selby Walker and Mr. Pickering were interested in wildlife, and waterfowl have wintered here since 1907, taking advantage of the open water below the ever-flowing springs. Winter food is supplied to the waterfowl by the bread firms and grain companies of Calgary.

Standing at the window watching the rain come down in sheets, our host told us that the big cottonwoods were sixty years old. When some of them were destroyed by beaver the busy builders were caught and moved elsewhere. Spruce trees have been planted to offer solid protection for the birds, especially during the winter, and Mr. Spargo told us that the local Boy Scouts had provided 150 bird houses. He told us, too, of the interesting personalities of some of the birds using the Sanctuary and of the skill with which some of them hide their nests. One duck, a permanent resident, is called "Cleopatra" for the handsome drakes seem to find her irresistible.

There was so much of interest at the Jefferies Inglewood Bird Sanctuary that I would urge our Saskatchewan members to explore the sanctuary when they visit the city of Calgary.

ED. NOTE: We should like to express our appreciation to the Alberta Fish and Game Association for taking on the responsibility of preserving this beauty spot in the heart of industrial Calgary. We hope that other organizations and individuals will take active steps to preserve areas of natural beauty in their localities as the Alberta Fish and Game Association in Calgary and Ernie Symons at Rocanville

Welcome to Moose Mountain

S.N.H.S. Summer Meeting, Moose Mountain Provincial Park, June 12-14, 1959



Saskatchewan Government Photo.

New gateway leading into Kenosee at Moose Mountain Provincial Park.

EDITOR'S NOTE: When Moose Mountain was chosen as the location of the 1959 summer meeting, we wrote to Peter McLellan at Arcola asking him to tell us what the area offered of interest to naturalists. In his reply, Mr. McLellan described the park and its typical wildlife, and sent us a useful list of birds that might be seen in the area in June. By happy coincidence, we received at the same time an item from W. A. Brownlee who grew up in the Moose Mountain and still calls it "home." We are using both these items to introduce the area to members who do not already know it.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Thinking of visiting Moose Mountain? If you have not already done so, you have missed one of the beauty spots of Saskatchewan. Situated in the southeast corner of the province, the country is rolling to hilly, with an elevation of from 2400 to 2700 feet above sea level, and it is quite well forested. One hundred and fifty square miles of this area form the Moose Mountain Provincial Park.

Slightly more than one-third of the park consists of lakes and marshes. The largest lake is "Kenosee," or as the old-timers call it, "Big Fish Lake."

To the southeast of the park is

located the White Bear Indian Reservation, some nine miles north of the town of Carlyle and just west of the original Cannington Manor settlement. Here we may see the Indian in his native haunts, as well as a modern oil well. We may also visit the largest lake in the entire area, "White Bear," the lake usually referred to as Carlyle Lake. There are excellent summer resorts at both Carlyle and Kenosee Lakes that may be reached from Highway #9.

The chief species of tree in the Forested Moose Mountain area is the aspen poplar. The Balm of Gilead or black poplar, Manitoba maple, ash, and many varieties of willows are al-

so present but there are no coniferous trees except those that have been planted. Among these latter, white and blue spruce and Scotch and jack pine have done well. There is an abundance of shrubs: including, with the willows already mentioned, hazelnut, saskatoon, pin cherry, chokecherry, low-bush and high-bush cranberry, rose, and raspberry. In some areas, wild hops grow profusely.—**W. A. Brownlee, Rose Valley, Sask.**

WILDLIFE OF THE AREA

The whole area is a game refuge and is densely populated as such. Moose and elk are plentiful (the Minister of Natural Resources, A. G. Kuziak, has just reported that a survey of half of the area of the Moose Mountain Provincial Park revealed an actual count of 122 elk), and white-tailed deer have overflowed into the adjoining mixed-farming area. The food question in winter is now serious.

There is only one locality frequented by flying squirrels, but reds and grays are numerous. Mink, muskrat, foxes, skunks and badgers are to be seen, but the coyote—once so common—has been almost wiped out by the poisoning campaign.

All birds which ordinarily nest in Southern Saskatchewan are to be found here in June. Colonies of great blue herons and cormorants are reasonably accessible by water. The waders have been reduced by the high water and many bare gravelly islands formerly covered by nesting gulls are now submerged. In fact, the main body of the park has not been as good a place for birds for the last few years because the water in all the lakes and sloughs has been right up to the trees. The entire absence of shore eliminates all the shore birds as well as those waterfowl usually found sitting on shores, such as the pond ducks. These birds have all moved out to the mixed-farming areas which are very accessible, and where the dry fall last year has provided the farm sloughs with lots of shore. Because the cat-tail sloughs in the park are submerged, the bittern, marsh wrens, blackbirds, etc., have moved out to farmland. The diving ducks and grebes and all birds nesting in trees are, of course, still in the park.—**Peter McLellan, Arcola, Sask.**

ROUTE

The park is on No. 9 Highway and is best reached by turning south from No. 1 at Whitewood or by turning north from No. 13 at Carlyle. A sectional map of the Moose Mountain area may be obtained for 25 cents from the Surveys Branch, Department of Natural Resources, Regina.

ACCOMMODATION

If you have not yet arranged accommodation at the Park, write or phone immediately to the Park Manager, Moose Mountain Provincial Park, Carlyle.

REGISTRATION

Registration fee for adults will be \$1.00, with no charge for children accompanied by parents. Meeting headquarters will be the Chalet at the park.

PROGRAMME

Friday, June 12 (All times M.D.T.)
p.m.

7:00-11:00—Registration.
Informal gathering.

Saturday, June 13

a.m.

6:00- 7:30—Birding (meet leaders at headquarters)

7:30- 8:30—Breakfast at Chalet
Late arrival registration

8:30- 9:00—Introduction to the programme (at headquarters)

9:00-12:00—Field trips*

p.m.

12:00- 1:00—Lunch in field or picnic on grounds

1:00- 4:30—Field trip*

5:00- 6:00—Dinner at the Chalet

6:00- 8:00—Free time

8:00- 9:30—Illustrated talk (Judge P. H. Gordon)

9:30-10:00—Star gazing (John Hodges)

10:00-10:15—Coffee

Sunday, June 14

a.m.

6:00- 8:00—Birding or free time

8:00- 9:00—Breakfast

9:00-12:00—Field trip*

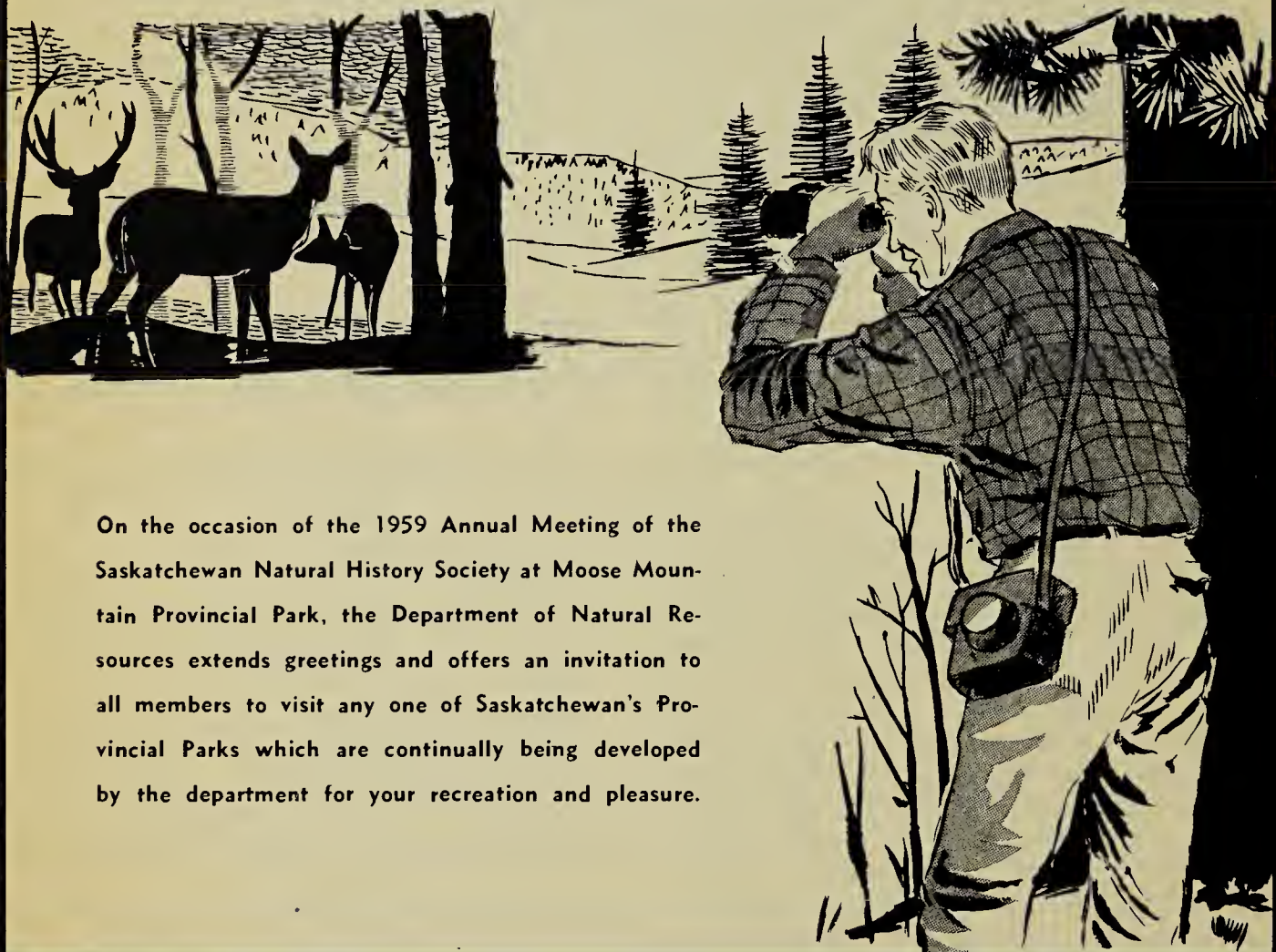
p.m.

12:00- 1:00—Dinner

1:00- 2:00—Summary of activities and question period

*Details of field trips to be arranged.

Welcome... to **SASKATCHEWAN'S PROVINCIAL PARKS**



On the occasion of the 1959 Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society at Moose Mountain Provincial Park, the Department of Natural Resources extends greetings and offers an invitation to all members to visit any one of Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks which are continually being developed by the department for your recreation and pleasure.

Province of Saskatchewan

Minister

HON. A. G. KUZIAK

Deputy Minister

J. W. CHURCHMAN



Photo by W. C. McCalla

SPARROW'S-EGG LADY'S SLIPPER

Cypripedium passerinum Richards

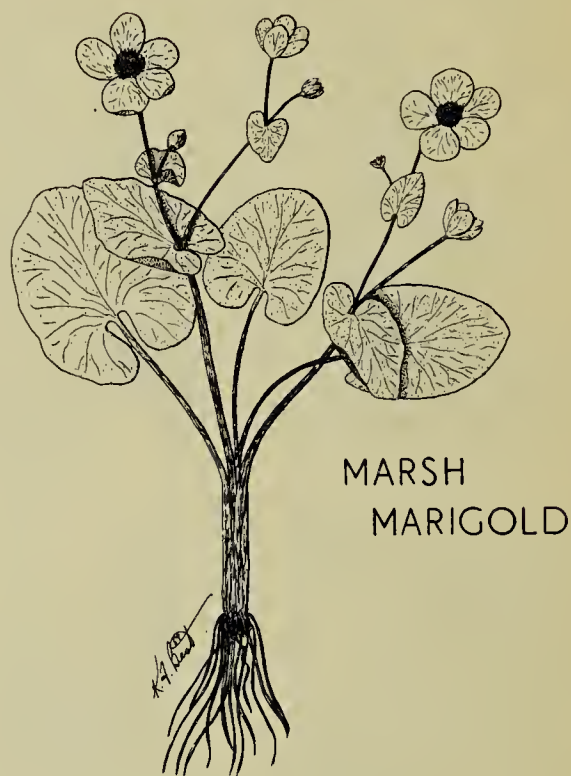
In D. S. Correll's fine book "Native Orchids of North America" I find this statement: "The Sparrow's-egg Lady's Slipper is almost transcontinental in its distribution. It is essentially a far northern plant, and doubtless grows well within the Arctic Circle." However that may be, it thrives far south of the Circle. The largest colony I have seen, 10 feet wide with 100 or more flowers in bloom at once, was in Bow Valley within the city of Calgary. It seems to occur more often in Alberta and Saskatchewan than in Manitoba. It likes shade and moisture. Stems 8 to 15 inches high with almost always one flower, lip white with purple spots inside.

More Saskatchewan "Greens"

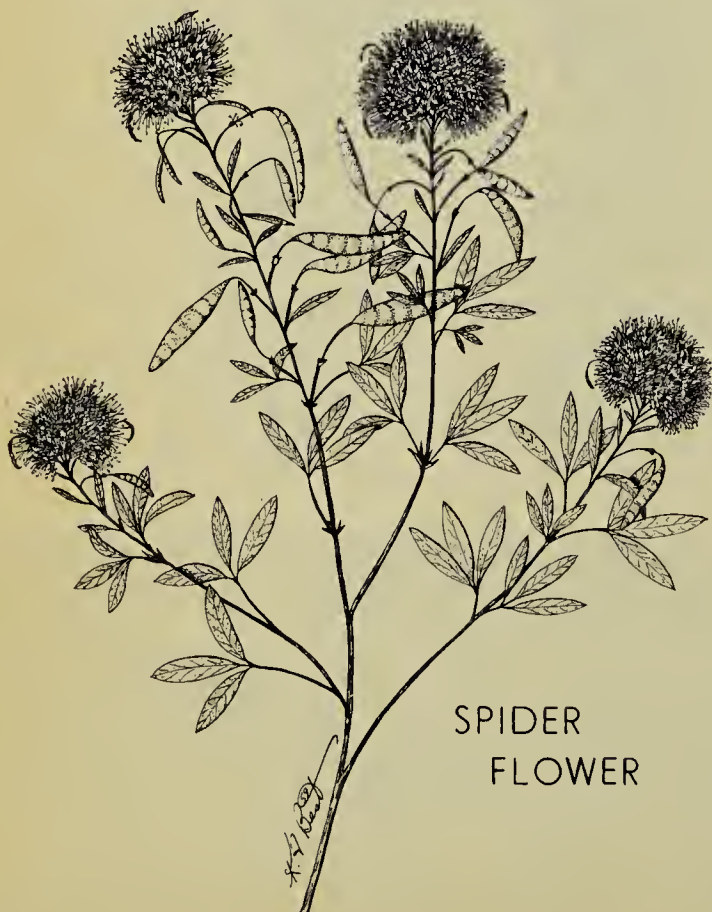
by Keith F. Best and Archie Budd, Swift Current

In continuation of the former item regarding the plants that can be used as greens, we can add a few further species.

The Marsh Marigold or King Cup (*Caltha palustris*) is a plant of the wet marshy areas of the south-east and northern area of the province. Very conspicuous in early spring are its showy blooms, sometimes an inch and a half across, bright yellow against the background of large, dark green, kidney-shaped leaves. The roots are coarse and fleshy and the stems are hollow and smooth. The leaves are said to be quite irritating if eaten raw, but the stems and leaves were boiled and eaten by our Indian popu-



MARSH
MARIGOLD



SPIDER
FLOWER

lation. In England this species grows very large flowers, sometimes three inches across, and is very plentiful. There are no true petals, the flower being made of 5 to 9 coloured sepals.

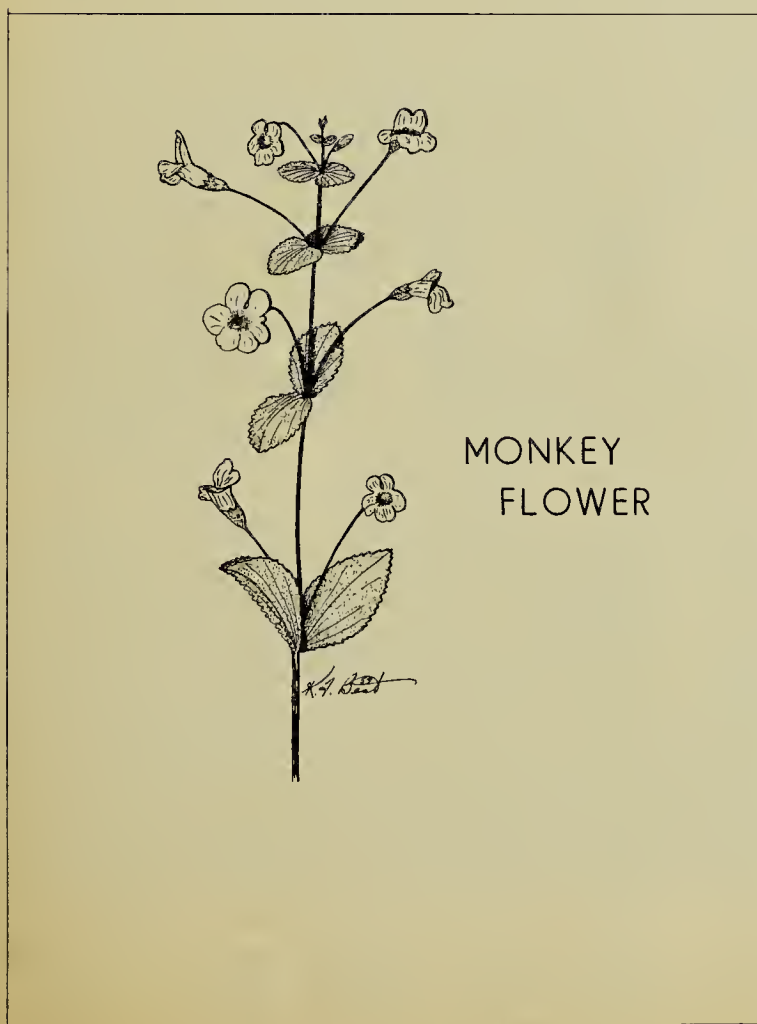
Another plant, the leaves and flowers of which were boiled and eaten by Indians, is *Cleome serrulata* variously known as the Spider Flower, Rocky Mountain Bee Plant or Stinking Clover. The Indians obviously had a somewhat different idea of palatability as the odour of this plant is anything but appetizing, but everyone to his taste. This is the pink flowered plant with compound leaves of three

leaflets, which grows about 12 to 18 inches high and makes a low hedge along roadsides in sandy and light soils. It bears pea-like pods containing large black seeds. Once there was an attempt to extract oil from these seeds but it was found impossible to remove the unpleasant smell.

The American Vetch (*Vicia americana*) has also been used as greens, the young stems and leaves being boiled and eaten. This is the common, purple-flowered vetch with the tendrils at the end of each compound leaf. Naturally the seeds of the vetches and the vetchlings (*Lathyrus*) were also used for food.



AMERICAN
VETCH



MONKEY
FLOWER

The foliage of the Monkey Flower or Yellow Money Musk, (*Mimulus guttatus*) was also eaten, either raw or cooked, by the early inhabitant of the west. This beautiful plant is quite scarce in Saskatchewan but it is plentiful west of the mountains. It grows in running water and bears handsome yellow flowers somewhat like those of snapdragons. According to an English scientist, the seeds float on the water until they become waterlogged and sink to the bottom where they germinate, and the seedlings again float further down stream until they drift into a new spot.

My Favourite Willow

by **Hugh McLaughlin**, Lewvan, Sask.



From a Kodachrome by H. McLaughlin

THE PEACH-LEAVED WILLOW, *Salix amygdaloides*

In the summer of 1955, I spent considerable time identifying the various willows that had sprung up along the roadsides as a result of the wet conditions favouring their germination. In making these identifications, I was pleased to have an offer of help from the well-known willow specialist, Carleton R. Ball, who was then 82 years of age, and who had read my article in the **Blue Jay** in which I told of how I was trying to learn these willows. I should like to pay tribute to him now in writing about my favourite willow tree.

As I predicted then, most of the willows and aspens that sprang up along the roadsides have since fallen prey to mowers and weed spray. The marsh that was the home of avocets, yellow-headed blackbirds, phalaropes, coots and ducks, that was then so formidable that you could only get into the middle of it on horseback, has now been returned to cultivation. The last vestige of

cattail was plowed under this past summer. I did try to save some of the willows by moving them to the creek where they took root with varying degrees of success. From this I conclude that the banks of a prairie creek down which water rushes in the spring do not provide as favourable an environment for the germination of willow seeds as the banks of a roadside ditch where the water is still.

My favourite willow, the peach-leaved willow, *Salix amygdaloides* Anderss., did not mind the racing water of spring or being submerged again by rains in July. It sent out supports a few inches above the base to brace it better in the oozy mud. The pussy and diamond willows simply drowned out, as they did around many sloughs throughout the province. Another willow that survived the ordeal by water was the basket willow, with its round mounds of growth and its leaves which seem to be perpetual hosts to

a gall; but it is a mere shrub, and not to be compared with the peach-leaf.

The next trial was by hail. In June, 1955, came one of the worst hail storms I have ever witnessed. All forms of wildlife suffered. In the sickening mess of reeds and cattails pounded flat, the odd bird limped about. A juvenile short-eared owl glared up at us, grounded by two broken wings. Crops, of course, were flattened to the ground, and even the tough sides of granaries and fence posts showed the marks of hail. Under these conditions trees suffered disastrously. Manitoba maples four years old were simply beaten to pieces, and had to be cut down to the ground the following spring. Young spruce had their branches torn off on one side, although they have since recovered fairly well. A tame pussy willow was badly barked and still presents an unsightly appearance with many dead twigs. But the peach-leaf survived best of all. Its slender branchlets, which hang with almost a droop when in full leaf,

were flexible enough to escape with little more than a bruising.

Several of the peach-leaved willows fell prey to beavers, and have come back with a shrubby growth. The one that withstood the hail, however, retains its graceful lines, although the rabbits did prune it one winter when the snow banks were high enough to let them get at its top branches.

In the summer of 1958 when the water in the creek made a swift retreat, when a fairly well established maple and poplar simply dried up and dropped their leaves, it thrived; and like the tree in the poem, it carried a nest in its hair—not a nest of robins in this case, but of kingbirds. Long into October, after ash, maple and even elms are bare as skeletons, its leaves welcome the first snows. This is a trait common to some tame willows too, of course, but I believe this native peach-leaf worthy to take its place amid the society of cultivated trees. For myself, I will always value it for the stoic qualities it has shown.



Photo by W. Yanchinski

THE YELLOW LADY'S SLIPPER

Cypripedium calceolus L. var. *pubescens* (Willd.) Correll

BOYS' AND GIRLS' SECTION

Edited by **Joyce Dew**, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.



Prize Winners

A large number of contributions were received for this issue which made the compiling of a good Boys' and Girls' Section easy but the problem of deciding what to use difficult. Items which weren't used for this issue are being filed and it is hoped they can be used at a later date. A good deal of the credit for the success of this section goes to the teachers who encouraged their pupils to send in contributions.

Their co-operation and interest is appreciated.

Prizes are awarded to Mrs. Alice J. Wardlaw, teacher of Kitzman School, for the obvious success of a nature hike which her pupils had; to Eunice Gawdun of Calder, Saskatchewan, for her apt description of a coyote, and to Mildred Boon of Maryfield, Saskatchewan, for telling us how she satisfied her curiosity about a black spot she saw from the school window.

Beauty Around Home

by Jean Kulick, age 13, Blaine Lake, Sask.

On Saturday, June 14, my sister and I were romping in the grass on a hill. We chanced to glance at the glistening blue water in a slough in our neighbor's field. I was willing at once to venture down the hill and explore around both sloughs for we knew only the one nearer home. I had to urge my sister to go with me and after a hard struggle of coaxing she trudged along slowly grumbling.

When we reached our destination it was beautiful to behold. Yonder lay the sparkling water with the reflection of the sinking sun and the fluffy pink clouds overhead.

The Redwinged Blackbirds were swaying in the cattails singing a merry "ok-a-lee".

We wandered about the beautiful water. Then suddenly we spied a host of little white flowers. There was no end to them along the shore. The

margin of the shore was pure white.

On the water were six Coots dashing to and fro in the water and also going under. But they didn't come near us. There were also a pair of Eared Grebes. These were quite tame and were about two yards away.

As we walked we saw a white spider with a black stripe on his back. A mosquito was caught in his web and he was having his supper.

Now the great blooming flower in heaven faded away below the horizon and the curtain of darkness began to fall. So we started for home when all of a sudden out of space flew a pair of wild geese and settled on the water. We loved to hear their honking.

Then night began to put its black cover over the earth so we went home talking of the beauty we had seen that day.

Contest Rules

Any young person may submit material for this section of the **Blue Jay**. The entries must be first hand observations in the form of letters, stories, poems, black and white sketches or photographs. Letters should not exceed 500 words. All entries must be accompanied by the name, age, and address of the sender.

Book, prizes or magazine subscriptions will be awarded with each issue of the **Blue Jay**. Special prizes will be given from time to time to teachers who encourage their pupils to write or who sponsor nature activities about which the children write.

Send in your nature observations to Boys' and Girls' Section, **Blue Jay**, Miss Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina. The closing date for next issue is June 15, 1959.

Pussy Willows in January

by Karon Brooks, age 13, Rhein, Sask.

Pussy Willows in January! It's hard to believe especially if you live in the parklands of Saskatchewan where January is still the middle of the winter. On January 21 while I was going for a walk on the crusts of snowbanks I noticed to my surprise some pussy willows. They were on the very top branches of a willow clump practically covered with snow.

In curiosity I broke a twig off and noticed that it did not bend nor twist but broke off cleanly so I knew the branch must be frozen.

Then I investigated further and observed the buds of a small poplar tree. They were large and sticky. When squeezed a sap oozed out of them. Breaking one open I noticed that tiny green leaves were already formed inside. I also noticed that these leaves have a protective covering of several layers of thin skin. The bud and leaves were both covered with plenty of sticky sap which I decided must keep them from freezing.

Later I brought some Pussy Willows and a poplar branch into the house, then I noticed that as soon as the branches became warm they would bend easily without breaking.

I learned from former observations that in the autumn after the leaves fall there are many tiny buds on the twigs and small branches. In spring they have grown much larger.

I have never noticed Pussy Willows in January and I wonder if their growth in this season is uncommon.



Evening Grosbeaks

by Judy Dubasov, age 13, Kamsack, Sask.

This sketch is one I made after observing the antics of one perched high in a poplar tree near our house. Although there were four altogether, this was the only one that seemed to be bold enough to sit still as I stood watching him.

The Hungarian Partridges*

by Mildred Boon, age 11, Maryfield, Sask.

One day the teacher suddenly called us to the windows. "Shh, be quiet, see those Hungarian Partridges," she said.

Sure enough there were twelve fat Hungarian Partridges. They were only six yards from the school and we could see them very well. Some were just a slate colour on the breast, others had black horse-shoe marks. We decided the ones with the horseshoe marks were the males. The face had a reddish-coloured marking. The partridges' broad tails were reddish-brown on the ends. The rest of the body was

* The Hungarian Partridge is now called the Gray Partridge in the new check-list.

blue-gray with a bright red-brown on the back.

We watched for a quarter of an hour then all the Hungarian Partridges went between two evergreen trees and huddled together, like chickens, for warmth. One kept walking around hunting for danger. Suddenly they all flew away. What startled them, we don't know.

"The Coyote"

by Alice Bawron, Anglia, Sask.

Faintly the rising moon,
Etches against the sky
A tawny statue on a hill
His silvery coat
Catching the starlight
As he stands, alone and still.

Kitzman School Nature Hike, March 17

sent in by Mrs. Alice J. Wardlaw, Rhein, Sask., as told to her by the pupils.

(Ed. note: only part of the report is given here. The entire report was too long to publish.)

The Grades 1, 2, 3 and teacher went south from the school. We followed the fence walking on the snow drifts. We saw tracks of rabbits, prairie chickens and dogs. They looked like this



Above the snow we picked up a milkweed or maybe a golden rod stock with a round white ball with a hole in it, where the worm had come out. We carried home a heavy pink and grey rough stone for our museum. The snow banks were three to four feet high, bigger than we were. We went sliding down them and got all wet because the day was warm and the snow was melting. Sometimes our feet broke through and we had fun getting out.

The boys went southeast across a field. Around the bushes were grouse or prairie chicken tracks and in the bushes were rabbit runs, little paths made by the rabbits through the bush. In the field were

holes where the wild grouse had been sleeping. We saw two bush rabbits. Their ears were brown. Also in the bush we saw a crow's nest and picked rabbit fluff off the trees.

By the side of a slough in the bullrushes were three blackbirds' nests. We took one to take to school but the boy that was carrying it let it fall and left it.

We brought back three stones. One seems to be pink gneiss and one grey gneiss, the larger stone was evidently fire formed because it is smooth hard flinty substance with holes and folds in it.

The girls went north. First we heard a chickadee singing beautifully. Then we saw some big fat pussy willows fully out. In the clumps of shrubs and willows were some branches with brown cones on top. Many branches had a brittle suety black growth on them. One willow branch had a fresh growth under the bark. We took it to school. There was also a round gall on it with several tiny holes in the ball.

Patsy saw two grouse. The first rose off the ground with its tail spread out, the other's tail was not spread. We didn't notice the pattern of the feathers.

A tree with a slit in it had sap running from it. In the undergrowth were many willows upon which the rabbits had been feeding. Under a clump of willows was a rabbit shelter and many rabbit runs through the bush.

In the middle of a big bush we found a decayed tree stump. We broke off a piece and took it with us. It was full of holes. In one hole was a black beetle or bug. It was all numb but when we worried it it moved its legs. Among the things we took back to school were some moss, a hard smooth growth from a tree, a rough grey crinkly substance growing on the bark and a twig with stringy gray-green stuff growing in a bunch on it. The twig was dried and dead.

Under another tree was a pile of small oval shaped balls with feathers in them, grey in colour and about an inch long. Maybe they were owl pellets.

We brought three nests back to school with us for our museum. One was built of fine grass in an up-

right fork of a branch from a tree. The other two are hanging nests. One is loosely constructed of straws and lined inside with fine grass, but too small to be an oriole nest, the other is a sturdy round nest built of fine grass and covered with a stiff, sticky white cotton-like substance which gives this nest its trim strength. Maybe these are vireos' nests, but what kind?

A Gyrfalcon Observation

by Jacob H. Jmaeff, Kamsack, Saskatchewan

On March 29, 1959, I observed what I believed to be a Gyrfalcon in its white phase.

We were driving by car in an area five miles south, one and a half miles east of the town of Kamsack. We saw a white bird sitting on a fence post.

As the car approached the bird took flight and flew northward. As it took flight we noticed its complete white coloration and pointed wings.

When we arrived home I consulted the Peterson Field Guide series and concluded that the bird was a Gyrfalcon in its white phase.

"Rabbits' Picnic"

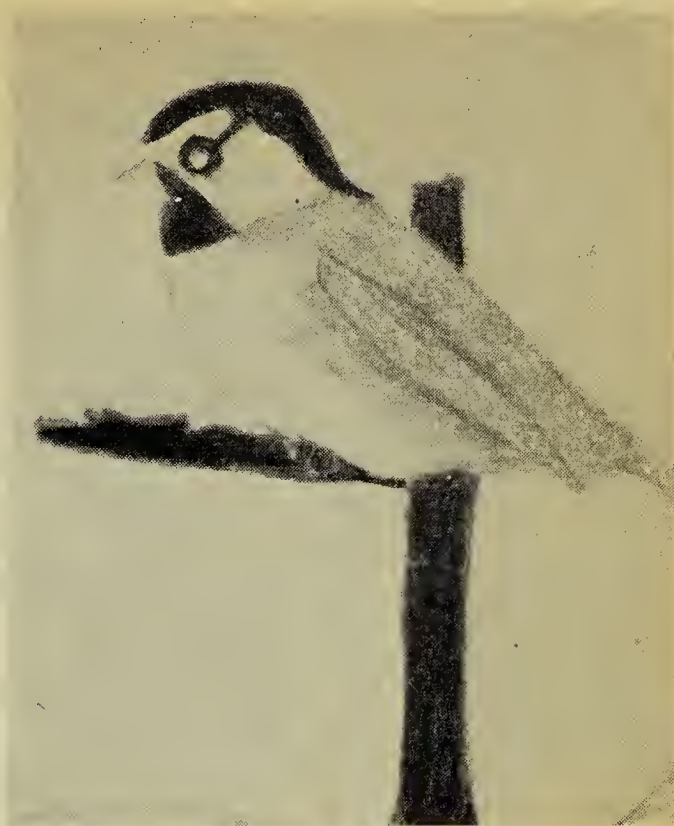
by Marjorie Wardlaw, age 6, Rhein, Sask.

One night when we were coming to the school with the truck we saw about thirty big jack rabbits playing on the snowbanks. The truck lights scared them and they all ran away, some one way and some another way.

A Strange World

by Wayne Bernakevitch, age 11, Kelliher, Sask.

This happened in the year 1958, July 23. Some of my friends and I were out walking in the bushes, when all of a sudden we heard a noise. We looked up and in a tree we saw a duck's nest and about ten feet away a magpie's nest. One of my friends climbed up and looked at the magpie's nest; there were babies in it and from that location we could see a mother duck sitting on her eggs. When she saw us she flew away. Then I told my friend in the tree the mother of the baby magpies was coming, so he got down and we all went away, but we all wondered why the magpie didn't harm the duck.



CHICKADEE

Gail Dereniwsky, Age 8,
Grade 3, Kitzman School.

Howling Coyote

by Eunice Gawdun, age 7, Calder, Sask.

One morning in March I saw a coyote in an open field. He sat down, lifted his head up and began to howl. His colour is gray. He looked just like a dog.

The Porcupine

by Mildred Bcon, age 11, Maryfield, Sask.

One day while we were looking out of a school window, we saw a black spot which looked much like a stone. Then it moved!

After school three of us went out to investigate. Approaching it we saw it was a porcupine. We slowed, wondering if it was really true that a porcupine could throw quills. He ambled over to a clump of willow, then rolled up into a ball. One of us went back to school for a camera. We wanted to see his face, so we threw a snowball at him. All it did was slap its tail. But once he looked up, then we snapped a picture. Finally we got up courage enough to go as close as a yard to him. When he didn't throw any quills at us we decided he couldn't. But I still wonder if you tamed a porcupine could you pet him? However, none of us were quite that brave.

Winter Records of Bats in Saskatchewan

R. W. Nero, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History

There are few winter records of bats in western Canada although they have been found as far north as Alaska (Mossman, A.S., and W. K. Clark, 1958. Winter records of bats in Alaska. *Journ. Mamm.*, 39: 585). Some of our bats migrate to warm regions for the winter (e.g., Red Bat and Silver-haired Bat), but others go into hibernation in suitable caves and mines. No caves are known in southern Saskatchewan but it would be expected that bats would hibernate in some of the coal mines in the south. In March, 1957, a group from the Museum (R. Fyfe, B. McCorquodale, A. Swanston and the author) visited several mines in the Estevan region (Long Creek valley). This trip was briefly noted in the **Blue Jay**, 15:65-67, but the details were not recorded. At that time we explored several horizontal mine shafts without finding any bats, but following the advice and direction of Mr. E. Tajc, owner and operator of a mine five miles southwest of Estevan, we were able to find a few. On March 15, 1957, we found 13 hibernating bats in several drill-holes of about two inches diameter remaining in the walls of a nearby old abandoned coal mine. The bats were collected with the aid of a flashlight and a long wire "grapple". We found eight Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) (one male, seven females) and five Big Brown Bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) (one male, four females). Up to five bats were found in a single hole, but not in mixed lots. So far as I can determine, this is the only record of hibernating bats in Saskatchewan. Other bats may be expected in similar situations in the southern part of the province, and we would be interested in hearing from anyone who may know about such places.

Occasionally bats are found in the winter in situations where hibernation would seem difficult, owing to an apparent lack of certain temperature and humidity requirements, and it is difficult to explain their survival. Nearly every year, for example, a few Big Brown Bats are found in Regina, usually in heated buildings where they are seen suddenly flying

about. Specimens have been collected in Regina as follows:

October 10, 1956—Female.
October 22, 1956—Male.
October 29, 1913—Male.
November 17, 1958—Female.
November 29, 1956—Female.
February 7, 1957—Female.
February 23, 1928—Male.
March 15, 1956—Male.

So far as I can determine no other species has been recorded in the province during this period of fall and winter. Our recent record is of special interest because it is apparently the most northern winter record for Saskatchewan. A female Big Brown Bat was found alive in a building at Prince Albert about February 1, 1959, by Mr. A. Ball. We are indebted to Miss Connie Pratt, Provincial Health Laboratory, Regina, for supplying the specimen and this information. No doubt these winter records tend to confuse the migration picture but observations of free-flying bats in fall and winter should be recorded. Such records are rare and seldom identified to species but provide clues to

(Continued on page 84)

A Guide to Saskatchewan Mammals

by
W. H. BECK



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By W. H. Beck

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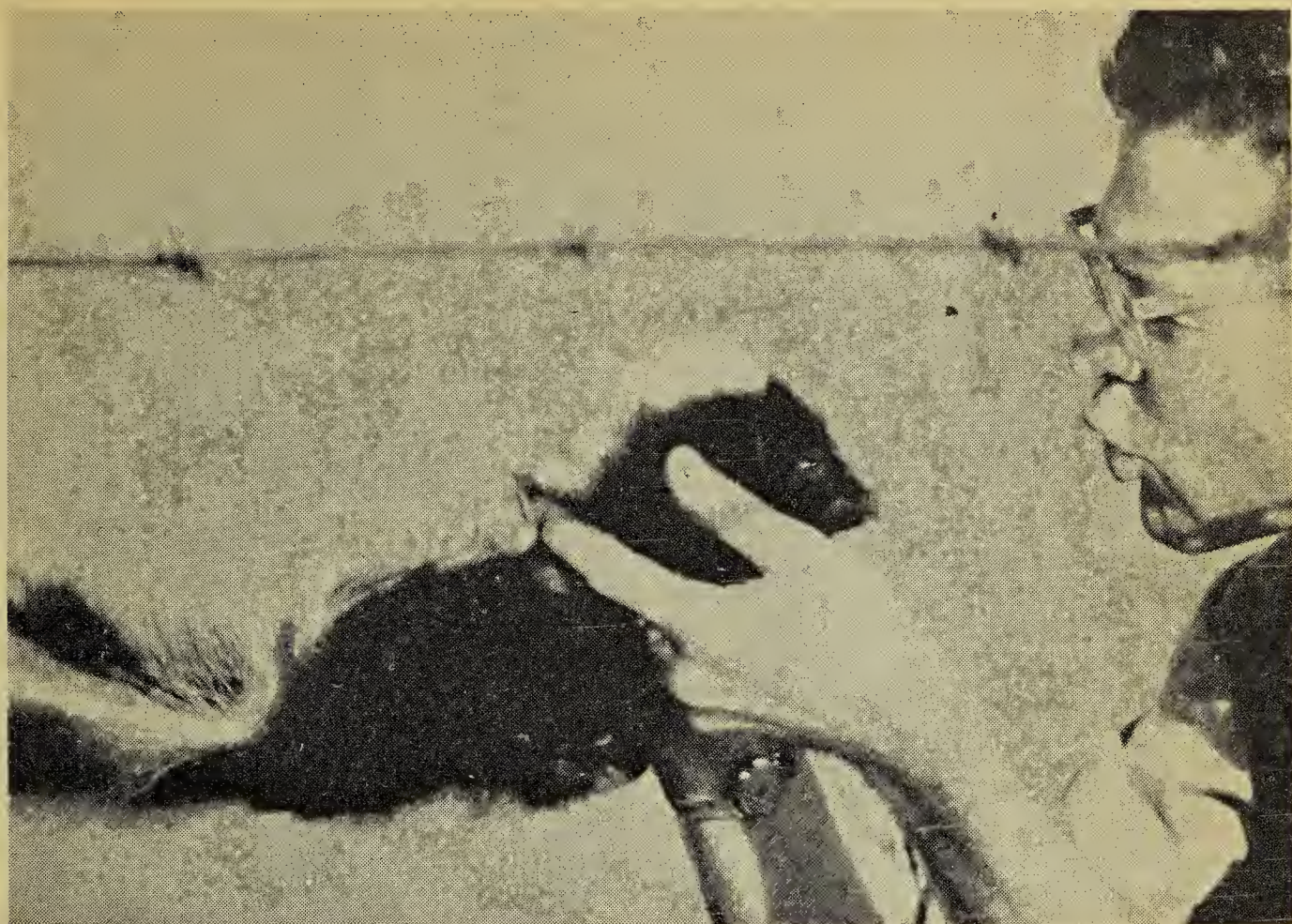


Photo by F. W. Lahrman

Dr. R. W. Nero soothing a half-grown wild skunk coaxed from a den six miles south-east of Elbow, July 14, 1958.



Photo by R. W. Fyfe.

Scientist shakes hands with porcupine.

Museum News

By **Fred G. Bard**, Director, Sask. Museum of Natural History.

On account of the unseasonably warm and dry weather, by mid April this year the Museum had already become involved in field work, most of which was unexpected. Specimens were collected at several significant paleontological and archaeological sites near Swift Current, Avonlea and Rockglen. Most of this work represents salvage operations.

Programmed field-work includes a three month continuation of the archaeological survey of the South Saskatchewan River Basin. This will be a joint expedition of the National Museum (Ottawa) and our own Museum. Field parties will again be led by Professor William J. Mayer-Oakes (University of Toronto). In addition a separate and similar joint expedition will again search for paleontological materials. Dr. W. Langston (Ottawa) will head this project.

Francis R. Cook (Wolfville, Nova Scotia), will spend the summer in southern Saskatchewan collecting reptiles and amphibians for the National Museum. It is expected that this work will lead to a publication on the distribution and taxonomy of these animals. This is part of our fauna which has been neglected and we urge interested persons to write to Cook in care of the Museum (Regina).

A party from the American Museum of Natural History (New York) will work in northern Saskatchewan, collecting material for a habitat group of Wolverine. T. Donald Carter, Assistant Curator, Dept. of Mammals, will lead this expedition.

Dr. Robert W. Storer (University of Michigan, Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan), former editor of the **Auk**, has already established himself in the Qu'Appelle Valley near Fort San, where he will study the comparative behaviour of our five species of grebes. Manley Callin has given invaluable advice and assistance in this program. Dr. Bob Nero and Fred Lahrman will spend some time working with Dr. Storer. We wish the latter the best of luck in this undertaking.

At the date of writing (May 2), the Canada Goose Management Program (Wascana Waterfowl Park, Regina) is off to a fine start with geese sitting on 28 nests! This project has attracted the attention of waterfowl managers throughout Canada. It is hoped that similar efforts will be made elsewhere to bring the Canada Goose back to the Canadian prairies.

At the time of writing, Whooping Cranes have started their long flight to their nesting grounds. In a telegram, dated April 3, Claude F. Lard, Refuge manager at Aransas, reported that "an aerial flight over area disclosed only 21 Whooping Cranes. Evidently 11 have departed for breeding grounds." A final telegram, dated April 27, reports "an aerial flight this afternoon disclosed that all Whooping Cranes have departed."

On April 14, Mrs. George Williams, Goodwater, Sask. (school teacher) sighted four Whooping Cranes, which were also observed by P.F.R.A. men in the area. A field check by Fred Lahrman and myself on April 14 revealed 3000+ Sandhills at the north end of Last Mountain Lake, but no Whooping Cranes were observed.

Professor K. J. McCallum, University of Saskatchewan, Chemistry Department, has announced results of a Carbon-14 test of one sample of wood from the middle level of the Scrimbit Forest site (see **Blue Jay**, March, 1959). The date of 9500 ± 500 years conforms to previous estimates for this post-glacial forest site.

IRPORTANT 1959 DATES TO REMEMBER

June 12-14, Summer Meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society at Moose Mountain.

August 25-30, Annual Meeting and Field Trip of the American Ornithologists' Union in Regina.

October, Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in Moose Jaw.

Notes From Members

When renewing her subscription to the **Blue Jay** last winter, Mrs. C. V. RICHARDSON, of **Stettler, Alberta**, sent a note about her experiences with the bird which gives our magazine its name. One morning the Richardsons' new bird feeder had seven Blue Jays feeding in it at once—a very beautiful sight. Mrs. Richardson was also interested last fall when a flock of warblers that she had never seen before stayed for a few days. These warblers had yellow patches on rump and sides, and Mrs. Richardson identified them with the help of her **Audubon Bird Guide** as Myrtle Warblers. It is quite likely that these warblers were Myrtles, but we suggested to Mrs. Richardson that in her area she might watch for Audubon's Warblers as well (distinguished by having yellow instead of white throats). The **Birds of Alberta** (1958) by W. Ray Salt and A. L. Wilk describes these warblers and their Alberta range.

Mrs. H. RODENBERG writes about the birds which came to her feeder at **Kinloch, Sask.** this past winter. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were plentiful, as many as five male Downies being seen at the feeder at one time. Chickadees and a pair of Gray Jays were also regular visitors, as well as a White-breasted Nuthatch which Mrs. Rodenberg notes as a "newcomer to these parts."

Birds are general favourites with our readers. A Cedar Waxwing injured by a cat was nursed back to health by JOAN KIRBY of **Winnipeg**, and Catbirds have spent a second winter in captivity in the care of Mrs. ELDON ROBERTSON, of **Balcarres, Sask.** Mrs. Robertson has shown much interest in the song pattern of her captive Catbirds. She wondered at first whether the young birds, rescued when the parent birds were killed by a hailstorm, would learn to sing isolated from other Catbirds. In fact, she introduced a canary hoping that the captive Catbirds might imitate it. Not only did the Catbirds develop a song of their own but when the canary stopped singing, during a period of moult, it lost its song and later imitated the song of the Catbirds. This experience raises the whole question of whether bird

song is learned or inherited, a question being given serious study now by research ornithologists. A member from **Nanaimo, B.C.**, CECILIA L. HILL, has sent us a note on this very subject clipped from the **Birmingham Post and Gazette**, Jan. 14, 1959. This note describes the findings of Dr. H. Kalmus, Reader in Biology at University College, who has been raising Chaffinches in isolation and analysing their songs. The conclusion of his experiments seems to be that no captive bird has the full range of sounds of the wild songster.

Mr. A. J. HRUSKA, **Gerald, Sask.**, reports that in May, 1958, he burned out a part of his valley. Where there had previously been very dense undergrowth with dried willows, thorn clumps and pincherry trees, nothing remained except the odd patch of thorns that did not burn out. A few days after the fire, on the north bank of the dip he came upon a tiny fawn lying on the black charred earth under a clump of hard bristly thorns. No attempt had been made at concealment, but the fawn was well protected by the barrier of thorns. Since the fawn was easily visible in this location Mr. Hruska



Photo by A. J. Hruska
White-tailed Deer fawn, May, 1958.

thought that the deer was relying on the thorns for protection of its fawn rather than camouflage.

Members of the **Moose Jaw Natural History Society** have an interesting field trip programme planned for them this season. Saturday and Sunday trips are planned to Bevis and Rutherford sloughs, to Old Wives' Lake, Stoney Beach Valley, Moose Jaw Valley, the Mortlach site, Buffalo Pound Lake, and the McRitchie farm at Moose Jaw. Various members of the society are acting as leaders for these trips. We under-

stand that the Saskatoon Club, too, has a stimulating field programme organized for this year under the able direction of Bob Folker.

The first annual meeting of the **Garden River Natural History Soc.** was held February 18, 1959, for the purpose of electing new officers and planning activities for 1959. The following officers were elected: President, F. W. Batty; Vice-President, L. Senga; Secretary-Treasurer, W. D. O'Kraney; Directors, Mrs. F. W. Batty, James Hrenyk, Pete Hrenyk, J. M. Brooks, R. Lloyd.

The Blue Jay Bookshelf

PORTRAIT OF A WILDERNESS.
By Guy Mountfort, Hutchinson, London, 1958. 240 pp. 30s.

The eaglet was only ten inches long, but any parent knows that size does not determine appetite. Watched from a swaying tree-top blind, a parent Short-toed Eagle was seen to deliver a serpent, fully 30 inches long and an inch thick, to the chick who, after a couple of abortive attempts, swallowed the gargantuan meal in one piece in a half hour of mighty gulping. Its crop was then so distended it toppled over on its side, but incredibly it packed away another meal shortly after.

This is one of the incidents which come alive in *Portrait of a Wilderness*. If there is a special heaven for birders it must be something like the Coto Donana sanctuary in Spain where Mountfort's book transported me. The Coto Donana is one of the few small areas in Europe "where nature reigns unchallenged in all her splendour." Here on the Atlantic coast of Spain just north of the Rio Guadalquivir is a wilderness with no roads, which has been untouched by two general wars and one civil war. In its 67,000 acres half of all the European species of birds (approximately 450) have been seen, and herds of Red and Fallow Deer and sounders of wild boar, still roam. Lynx, Wild Cat, Genet may be found still, with numerous lizards and snakes. It is a true wilderness, although it is reasonably accessible.

Portrait of a Wilderness, which is the story of three expeditions worked into one homogeneous account, pro-

vides much information on how to mount a natural history expedition, whether major or minor, when serious results are wanted. Although these were primarily birding expeditions, experts in botany, mammalogy and other wildlife sciences contributed, so that the book covers the whole life of the region. The birds, of course, are treated exhaustively, but there is much on the mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and plants, with a final chapter on the ecology of the area to complete a well-balanced book on natural history.

Besides the author, the members of the expedition included Roger Tory Peterson, François Boulière, Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke and his wife, James Fisher and Julian Huxley—to name only those whose works would be known to general readers here. The other members of the expedition were no less qualified. I found the book most interesting to read with *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* in hand, particularly as the three authors of that Guide (Roger Tory Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom) were working on it during the expeditions. A surprising number of the birds encountered are birds we might see in Regina. A few examples are given here, with the European common name in brackets where different: Eared (Black-necked) Grebe, Black crowned Night Heron (Night Heron), Mallard, Gadwall, Peregrine, Ringed Plover, Black and Common Terns, Bank Swallow (Sand Martin), Magpie, Northern (Great Gray) Shrike,

and House Sparrow. In the area of the Coto the expeditions logged 193 species (one, the Masked Shrike, a first for Europe), with 29 more seen nearby.

Portrait of a Wilderness is a valuable and readable account of how to go birding and come home with a full story, plenty of first-class pictures (black-and-white, and colour slides), motion picture film, and sound recordings. Apparent throughout the book is the great truth known to all outdoors people—the most important things to take along are good companions.

If I may add a footnote: I had barely finished writing the above notes when I received a letter from England from a war-time friend of mine who devoted a good part of her letter to describing the absorbing television film made by the expedition. It seems that the book has a worthwhile companion in the film. —Frank Brazier, Regina.

THE FIRST BOOK OF BIRDS.
By Margaret Williamson, New York.
Franklin Watts Inc., 1951. \$2.75.

Some of the best children's books in nature science are written for the "First Book" series published by Franklin Watts Inc., New York. The books retail at \$2.75, contain about 70 pages, are attractive and well illustrated. Those written by Margaret Williamson are tops and make excellent reading for adults as well as children. The three books I have read by this author are "The First Book of Bugs" (1956), "The First Book of Mammals" (1957), and "The First Book of Birds." Information which is usually considered too complicated for children to understand or too difficult for the author to put in non-scientific terms is here treated simply and honestly. After reading these books I had the feeling that I had learned a good deal of zoology and had done it painlessly.

The sketches are clear and well labeled. In the "First Book of Birds" there are, for example, drawings to illustrate how an egg is formed from its beginnings in the egg factory (ovary) to the completed egg where the shell gets "painted." Drawings show the developing embryo within the egg. In the next section various feeding habits of young birds are illustrated.

Feeding habits of pelicans are de-

scribed: "A pelican opens its enormous bill and the young poke their heads down to help themselves to the half-digested food brought up from its stomach." A description of ducks includes this: "Many ducks have broad, flat bills with fringed edges. They make good sieves. Their tongues are fringed, too. These ducks strain small animals and plants out of the mud and water as they swim along or as they tip and dive to get food." Courtship is described: "Besides singing, a male bird that is showing off in front of a female may either twitter, coo, or crow, all the while fluttering his wings and posing or strutting about with fluffed up feathers. He may skip or jump or turn or bow to the ground in front of her. He may even chase her, or he may put on flying exhibitions in the air around her. He does all kinds of things that show off his bright feathers or any special ornaments he may have, for cocks are often much more brilliantly colored than hens."

This I hope is enough to indicate the clarity and ease with which Margaret Williamson treats her subjects. I cannot recommend the books too highly.—Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.

CANADIAN AUDUBON. Published six times yearly by the Audubon Society of Canada, 423 Sherbourne St., Toronto 5, Canada. Yearly subscription \$3.00

The magazine formerly known as *Canadian Nature* has received a new and more attractive format and is now published under the title *Canadian Audubon*. The new title indicates the magazine's link with the Audubon Society and in this respect is a happy choice. *Canadian Audubon* is national in scope and is aimed at the general reading public. Articles such as "Insecticides and Wildlife" by M. H. A. Kennleyside, and "Can We Save Birds of Prey" by John A. Livingston serve to keep the public informed on current conservation problems. In addition to articles on conservation there is a series on Canadian biotic zones starting with one on Arctic birds by John Crosby of the National Museum. These articles are well illustrated with drawings.

One series of articles well worth continuing is the series which began with "Skates in the Public Aquarium" by Murray A. Newman. In addition

to giving general information about skates, the article informs the reader about a public aquarium. A series of articles such as this dealing with aquaria, natural history museums, zoological gardens, etc., across the country would be profitable. A directory of such places could be included in each issue for the benefit of readers who are travelling and want to know where such places are located.

The Audubon Juniors section has stories especially for children, and in the March-April issue there are suggestions for the teacher on how to use articles throughout the issue. Teachers and other group leaders who are involved in teaching nature science will find this magazine a valuable teaching aid.

The articles in *Canadian Audubon* are well written and not too technical. They provide a wealth of information on many aspects of wildlife from the housekeeping activities of ants to a discussion of the unreasoning fear many people have of snakes. In the latest issue there is an article on astronomy, "Stars with Tails," and one dealing with the plant kingdom, "Miracle of the Swamplands." This should indicate the wide range of subject matter which is covered.—Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.

Western Grebe Colony. By Robert W. Nero, photographs by Fred W. Lahrman. *Natural History*, LXVIII: 291-294, May, 1959.

During the summers of 1956 and 1957 a colony of Western Grebes nesting on dry land on the Isle of Bays in Old Wives' Lake southwest of Moose Jaw was studied by a party from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. The valuable observations made at this time of the first dry-land nest site reported for the Western Grebe were published in the *Auk*, 75:347-349, 1958 (Cf. *Blue Jay*, 16:185-6, 1958). Now the behavioural aspects of this study are presented in an article of a more popular nature appearing in *Natural History* (published by the American Museum of Natural History, New York). Lavishly illustrated (ten black-and-white photos and one full-page colour plate), this article describes in a readable style the courtship and nesting behaviour of breeding Western Grebes observed in the Isle of Bays

colony. A good deal of the enthusiasm of the observer is conveyed by Dr. Nero, and he makes the reader feel that watching the behaviour of the grebes, in addition to contributing valuable information for their research study, was an exhilarating experience in itself.—M.B.

Biological Research in Conversation. Special issue of the *Bulletin for Medical Research* (Vol. 13, No. 1, Jan.-Feb., 1959), published by the National Society for Medical Research, Chicago.

An unusual issue of the *Bulletin for Medical Research* has come to the editor's desk. It is an issue devoted entirely to a symposium entitled "Biological Research in Conservation," and it should be of great interest to all natural history students concerned about sound conservation policies and practice.

Since public conservation policy is often based on popular misconceptions rather than on the established findings of biological research, this journal (founded to encourage research in the biological and medical sciences) feels that it is important to clear away some of these long-established popular prejudices. Accordingly, five of the foremost conservation scientists in the United States have been asked to contribute to this special issue. Perhaps the name best known to us is that of Durward L. Allen, who writes of "Conservation Biology—Facts and Fallacies." Mr. Allen is concerned to show, as he did so effectively in his *Wildlife Legacy*, the lack of wisdom in certain so-called "conservation" practices such as the artificial stocking of game and fish, the over-protection of game species like deer in areas where overpopulation will destroy their natural habitat, and the control of predators by the bounty system. Copies may be obtained at 25 cents per issue from The National Society for Medical Research, 920 South Michigan Blvd., Chicago 5, Illinois.—G. F. L.

(Continued from page 78)
the migratory habits of these interesting mammals. Thanks to Mrs. D. Sutton, Rocanville, we have an early spring record for the Little Brown Bat, one of which she found drowned in a rain barrel on May 5, 1958. This is the earliest record we have for this species.

THE SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Printing costs per page for the **Blue Jay** were raised at the end of 1958, and it is more important than ever that we strive for a larger circulation to meet these new costs. Please encourage other people interested in natural history to become members of the society.

We are also making a special appeal in this issue for further donations to help meet the additional costs of publishing the society's special publications.

MEMBERSHIPS

All persons interested in any aspect of nature are invited to join the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. Membership dues per calendar year are: Sustaining, \$5.00; Regular, \$1.00. The **Blue Jay** is sent without charge to all members not in arrears for dues. Send your membership to the treasurer, Elmer L. Fox, 1053 Gladmer Park, Regina, Sask., Canada.

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Chalet at Kenosee Lake, Moose Mountain Provincial Park

Sask. Govt. Photo

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